

Work, Skills and Health



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Foreword

Work is defined as an activity involving mental or physical effort done to achieve a purpose or result. Skills are defined as the learnt ability to perform an action with determined results with good execution often within a given amount of time, energy, or both. Work and skills both have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing.

Being in good work is better for your health than being out of work. There is clear evidence that good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives and protects against social exclusion. Our occupations, work and employment forms part of our identity and sense of self which contributes to our health and well-being. Conversely losing a job, experiencing unemployment, and not having access to skills and employment opportunities can negatively impact our health and wellbeing.



Darrell Gale
Director of Public Health

Following on from last year's 2020/21 report - 2020: A Year of COVID-19 in East Sussex. This year's 2021/22 report focuses on work, skills, and health in East Sussex. The world of work and skills, like most aspects of our lives, has been and will continue to be, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It's unlikely that the world of work will go back to something that resembles the pre-COVID-19 landscape. Where, how, and when we work will continue to evolve for many. However, the way in which our working world will change will bring about benefits as well as disadvantages in relation to health and wellbeing. These changes are also unlikely to be experienced equally by the population, therefore we must consider the implications of the changing nature of work and its relationship with disparities in health and wellbeing.

Historically, East Sussex as a county has a mixed economy comprised of small and medium enterprises alongside an established public sector. Lower skilled and lower paid work compared to England has been the established long-term trend. The pockets of lower skilled populations, with lower paid jobs also align with localities that have some of the poorer levels of health and wellbeing.

Work, specifically good quality and safe work can be good for our health and well-being. Work provides us with many things, such as an income, opportunities to develop skills, knowledge, an occupation, and social interaction. Volunteering also provides many health and wellbeing benefits, as well as contributing to a wide range of other causes for good. As individuals and collectively, we must consider the relationship between our health and work. We are all living and working longer, which is a good thing overall, however not all our population has the health to enable them to continue to work into later life. Ensuring everyone can age and work well, with the necessary skills equally, is a key concern for the future.

The UK Youth Parliament have conducted a ballot of nearly half a million young people in the UK asking them to choose which issues matter to them most. Over 10,000 young people from East Sussex voted and stated that jobs, money, homes and opportunities are

their biggest concern in a mass survey of 11-18 year olds across the county. Given this, we must take collective action to address their concerns.

Employers and businesses have a role in improving the health and wellbeing of our local population. This can often be achieved with small levels of investment yet bring many returns. I encourage all employers, whatever size, to review this report, use the resources section and join our Wellbeing at Work programme.

As a county blessed with a coastline, rural land and many towns, there are many opportunities to develop our local economy and improve our resident's health and wellbeing. Our partners in business, education, health, and the voluntary sector are all working hard to seize these opportunities to ensure our residents and population can develop the skills required to work in the economy of the future and live well.

Results of East Sussex Make your Mark 2022:

Young people all over the county choose the topic most important to them. This is what they said.

20 East Sussex schools and colleges took part.

10,463 young people in East Sussex Voted.

-  **1. Jobs, Money, Homes and Opportunities - votes 2161**
-  **2. Environment - votes 2074**
-  **3. Education and Learning - votes 2017**
-  **4. Health and Wellbeing - votes 1877**
-  **5. Poverty - votes 1261**
-  **6. Our Rights and Democracy - votes 649**
-  **7. COVID-19 Recovery - votes 424**



Executive Summary

This year's Director of Public Health's Annual Report considers the relationship between work, skills, and health. It is the second in a series of three annual reports looking at the broad social and economic circumstances that together influence health, known as the social determinants of health, in East Sussex.

The relationship between work and health is complex. Good work can maintain health, and poor work can be detrimental to health. To maintain health, work needs to be paid adequately, be safe and stable, offer opportunity for development, prevent social isolation, and offer a degree of control or decision making. Amongst all of this, we need to have the skills to be able to access good quality work.

In general, the lower an individual's socioeconomic position the poorer their health. This is known as the social gradient in health. Therefore, well paid work allows individuals to move up the socioeconomic spectrum, improving access to good quality housing, education, food, care and allowing more opportunity for socialisation and leisure, all of which are beneficial to health.

Access to health-promoting, good quality work is not equal. People with disabilities, those from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, people with poorer parents, women, and lone parents are all less likely to be in well paid professional employment, although there are some nuances within this which are discussed in the main report. They are consequently more at risk of experiencing a negative cycle where poor health makes it harder to access good work.

Employers in the county need to recognise the role they play in helping their employees and their community to maintain good health. Approximately 98% of businesses in East Sussex have under 50 employees, but regardless of their size, they can have a major combined influence on the local economy in a way that benefits nearby communities and the environment. For example, a hospital choosing to buy food from a local supplier or promoting healthy transport.

In East Sussex, our population has a significant proportion of older people. As state pension age rises, it is poorer people who work for longer, and are more likely to continue working with a disability or long-term health conditions. To help people access good quality work across the life course, they need to be given opportunities to develop and learn new skills throughout their careers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has of course changed the landscape of work dramatically, with many people experiencing financial insecurity and unemployment, often for the first time. Some changes are likely to be with us for some time, if not permanently, such as the shift to homeworking. This brings benefits as well as challenges for our health.

Fortunately, East Sussex is well placed to support people into work and to help employers become health promoting, through a range of services and these are detailed in the 'resources section' at the end.

In this report, we make recommendations that, if implemented, we believe will help to improve the quality of work and health locally.

These recommendations are:

| Recommendation:

East Sussex County Council and our partners should continue to have the highest level of ambition and maintain actions to enable our residents, families and communities to achieve the best possible skills and access economic opportunities.

| Recommendation:

Employers should continue to build on their progress in creating employment opportunities and inclusive workplaces for those with protected characteristics and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

| Recommendation:

All public sector organisations and private businesses should be encouraged to sign up to work towards a [Wellbeing at Work East Sussex award](#). This will enable them to take advantage of the resources available on how to improve wellbeing in the workplace. Some of the ambitions and actions for promoting the wellbeing of staff align with actions to protect the environment and reduce climate change.

| Recommendation:

Employers are encouraged to undertake an annual workforce survey (also known as a health needs assessment) to increase their knowledge of the health needs of their workforce. This will enable employers to support their employees and guide them towards services to assist them in improving their health and wellbeing.

| Recommendation:

The local authority, along with other statutory and third sector organisations should continue to ensure that staff are aware of the existing range of employment support available in the county. They should share this information with individuals and promote the health benefits of working as an outcome.

| Recommendation:

Large organisations, including local authorities, NHS providers and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector should align plans and ambitions to fulfil their role as Anchor Institutions. The process and learning from adopting this approach should be shared with other large employers in the county.

| Recommendation:

Employers of hybrid or homeworkers should look to implement relevant practical suggestions outlined by the [Working Well From Home toolkit](#).

| Recommendation:

Individuals and groups furthest away from the labour market should continue to be supported by long term partnerships and initiatives that offer opportunities to enable them to develop skills and support them into employment such as those offered via the DWP, community organisations and local training providers.

However, these provisions need to consider health and wellbeing as part of their offer to participants, who may need support with mental and physical health needs, neurodiversity support, and support to build confidence.

| Recommendation:

National and local initiatives should continue to address current known gaps in East Sussex in Health and Social Care, Agriculture, Construction, Engineering, and the Visitor Economy as well as focusing provision on the future skills opportunities pertaining to net zero and new digital and automated technologies.

| Recommendation:

The many funding streams that support skills and employability need to be better joined-up to maximise impact and avoid duplication. The learning gained from the evaluations of employability projects about ‘what works best to support people into learning and work’ needs to be shared to inform future projects. Employment and skills funding is mainly short-term, and we need to influence funding bodies, including government, to provide long-term funding, rather than the current piecemeal approach.

| Recommendation:

Improving the published data and increasing the understanding of the health and support needs of Universal Credit claimants would enable partners to develop programmes to increase opportunities for employment, skills development, and volunteering.

| Recommendation:

A range of partners should continue to develop local initiatives that support the Skills East Sussex priorities and the implementation of the Government’s White Paper Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth. Increasing the number of those in the local workforce with a level 3 qualification, improving the technical vocational skills of local residents and improving the maths skills of adult residents without a Level 2 qualification through the new Multiply Shared Prosperity Fund are some of the immediate actions should be supported.

Introduction

The impact of work on health, and indeed health on work, is well documented and wide reaching [\[Reference 1\]](#). A negative working environment, identified by high effort, low pay jobs with minimal control and lack of organisational fairness can be detrimental to health. Conversely, a good working environment can be protective, and result in a more engaged and productive workforce [\[Reference 2\]](#).

People of working age, 16yrs to 64yrs [\[Footnote 1\]](#), make up just over half (56.9%) of the population of East Sussex [\[Reference 3\]](#), but the effect of the relationship between work, skills and health is felt by everyone. In part as a result of rising state pension age, twice as many people are in employment after the age of 64 than in 1998 [\[Reference 4\]](#), and older workers are more likely to report multiple long term health conditions and caring responsibilities which impact their work [\[Reference 4\]](#). In younger people, the Health Foundation identifies skills and qualifications developed between the ages of 12 and 24, and good quality work as key to minimising ill-health in later life [\[Reference 5\]](#).

The chance of having a job that either positively or negatively impacts our health is not evenly distributed across society; good quality (health protective) jobs are concentrated at the upper end of the social gradient, and conversely jobs which are harmful to health are more frequent at the lower end of the social gradient [\[Reference 6\]](#).

The relationship between work and health is complex and multifaceted. This report explores this and makes several recommendations to improve the health and working lives of people in East Sussex.

Work means different things for different people, at different times in our lives. Whilst we acknowledge the important impact on health of unpaid care work, attending schools, colleges and universities, and other meaningful activities, this report focuses specifically on paid work and volunteering.

1. Although the working age population usually refers to those aged 16-64, state pension age has risen to 66 and will continue to rise to reach 68 by 2046. This means that increasing numbers of people in the over 65 age group are likely to be economically active. This report does not attempt to adjust for this change.

Work in East Sussex

The type of work undertaken by people living in East Sussex is influenced by local and regional geography and demography. For example, the relatively high proportion of people employed in the care sector is driven by the higher-than-average age profile of East Sussex [\[Reference 7\]](#).

Compared to the national average East Sussex has more people employed in public administration, education, health, agriculture, fishing, mining and utilities, construction, accommodation, food service activities, the arts, entertainment, and recreation industries. Fewer people compared to the national average are employed in information and communication, transportation and storage, manufacturing, professional, scientific, and technical activities and financial, insurance and real estate [\[Reference 7\]](#).

A higher proportion of people in East Sussex are self-employed than nationally, and a greater percentage of people work part time [\[Reference 7\]](#). The South East has a lower proportion of workers than the national average who are members of a trade union, despite a high proportion of public sector employees [\[Reference 8\]](#) [\[Reference 9\]](#).

East Sussex has fewer businesses per resident than the regional average and growth is slowing. There are 6% more active businesses than in 2015, and 0.8% more since 2019. In 2021 there were 23,335 businesses in East Sussex, of which 90.7% had fewer than 10 employees. East Sussex has relatively few medium and large businesses (50+ employees) [\[Reference 7\]](#).

Fastest growing sectors in the county (2016-2021)

(in terms of number of business units)



Transport & Storage - up 53% (England up 42%)



Accommodation & food - up 15% (England up 16%)



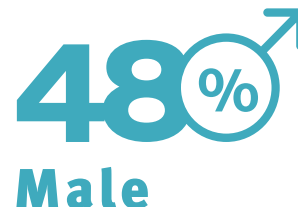
Construction - up 13% (England up 20%)

Our population

Total Population

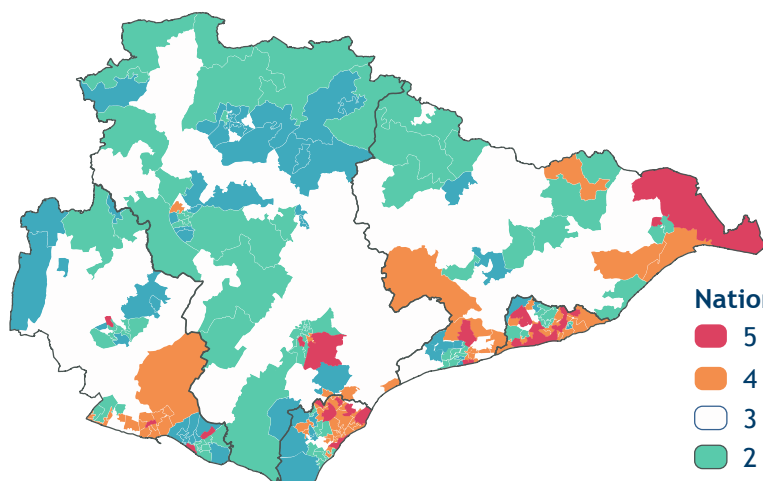


Gender



Similar to England

Deprivation (IMD, 2019)



Where are the most deprived LSOAs

Eastbourne	26%
Hastings	49%
Lewes	4%
Rother	13%
Wealden	9%

14%



are in most
deprived quintile

National IMD quintile, IMD 2019

- 5 Amongst 20% Most deprived nationally
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 Amongst 20% Least deprived nationally

Occupation

East Sussex ● England ●

12% **10%**



Skilled trades

13% **9%**



Caring / Leisure
Other services

7% **7%**



Sales

5% **6%**



Plant / Machine

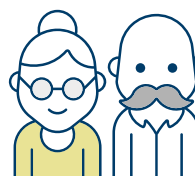
By 2025 increases in the proportion of the elderly in the East Sussex population.

65⁺



increase of
8.2%

85⁺



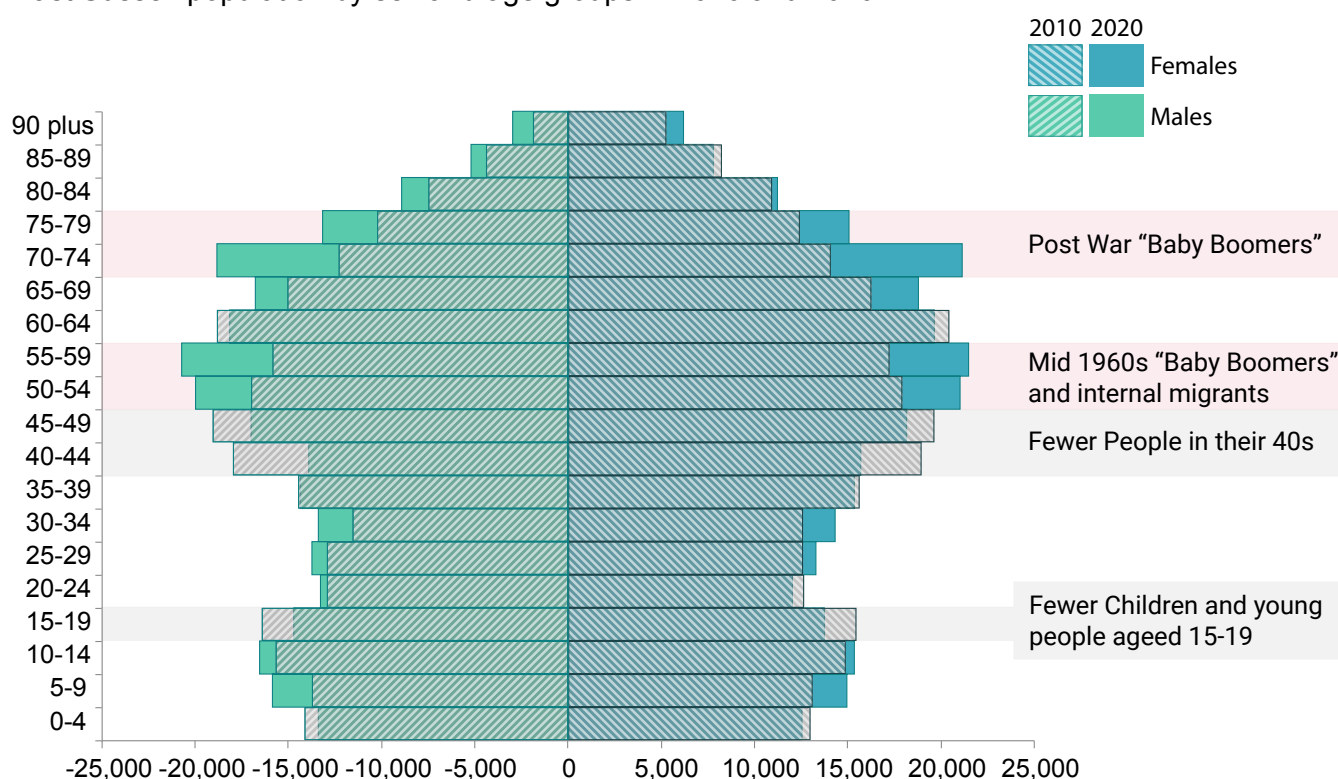
increase of
4.3%

Ethnicity by percentage

Ethnic Origin	East Sussex	England & Wales
British and Northern Irish	91.7	80.5
Irish	0.8	0.9
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.2	0.1
Other White	3.4	4.4
White and Black Caribbean	0.4	0.8
White and Black African	0.2	0.3
White and Asian	0.5	0.6
Other Mixed	0.4	0.5
Indian	0.4	2.5
Pakistani	0.1	2
Bangladeshi	0.2	0.8
Chinese	0.4	0.7
Other Asian	0.7	1.5
African	0.3	1.8
Caribbean	0.1	1.1
Other Black	0.1	0.5
Arab	0.1	0.4
Any other ethnic group	0.2	0.6

In 2020 there were estimated to be 558,852 people living in East Sussex, of whom, 318,101 were of working age (16-64 years), making up 56.9% of the population. Around 52% of people living in East Sussex are female [\[Reference 7\]](#).

East Sussex population by sex and age groups in 2010 and 2020



Earnings in East Sussex

East Sussex has amongst the lowest average full-time workplace-based weekly earnings in the South East. These lower earnings are driven in part by the higher proportion of people working in low paid care jobs compared to regional or national averages. After two years of declining pay in 2019 and 2020, the county saw the highest annual increase (11.2%) of all County Council / Unitary Authorities (UA) in the region [\[Reference 10\]](#), however earnings remain below the regional average.

In April 2021 the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data states the gross median wage for a full-time job in East Sussex was £554 per week. This is compared to a South East average of £635 and an England average of £613. There are considerable differences between local areas. The median wage for a full-time job in Hastings at £500 was over £50 lower per week than the East Sussex average.

In 2021 average annual earnings for people who work in the county full-time was £27,090, and for residents who work full-time, the figure was £30,949. This suggests that some East Sussex residents commute outside of the county to seek higher paid employment.

The gender pay gap in weekly workplace full-time pay in most districts and boroughs in the county is somewhat smaller than the national average. Workplace-based female pay is lower than for males - with women full-time workers earning 90% of their male counterparts - compared to 84% in England.

The part time pay gap, the hourly pay difference between full time and part time work, is smaller in East Sussex than England as a whole. This may be as a result of the higher percentage of people working in public sector jobs compared to the national average.

This is of interest as the gender pay gap in most of the South East region is larger than England as a whole, a contributing factor in East Sussex having a smaller gender pay gap may be the high proportion of public sector roles.

Benefit Claimants

Universal Credit (people on low incomes)

Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit for people aged over 18 and below state pension age, on a low income or who are looking for work. Recipients of Universal Credit may be working or not working, and not everybody who is in receipt of Universal Credit is required to work or seek work, for example those with severe disabilities or caring responsibilities.

In January 2022, 45,373 people in East Sussex were in receipt of Universal Credit, which is equivalent to 14.3% of the working age population. Of Universal Credit claimants in East Sussex, 39.7% (17,870 people) were in employment in December 2021, equivalent to 5.6% of the working age population. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of people receiving Universal Credit in East Sussex increased substantially from February 2020 (25,381 people) and peaked in February 2021 (48,860 people) but now continues to fall (particularly for males).

Claimant Count (people seeking work)

In January 2022, there were 13,825 people receiving either Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit with the requirement to actively seek work, together these groups are referred to as the Claimant Count. The Claimant Count as a percentage of the working age population (Claimant rate) is 4.3% in East Sussex and is broadly similar to England as a whole (4.4%), but higher than the South East average (3.4%).

There is large variation between localities, age and gender, for example the claimant rate for young men aged 18-24 in Hastings is 12.2%, whereas for women of the same age in Wealden it is 3.2%. The Claimant Count, the number of people seeking work, in the county more than doubled between March and May 2020 from 9,135 to 20,680. After remaining stable for around a year, it has been gradually declining since April 2021 but is still 4,690 higher than in March 2020.

Government support during the pandemic

Over the course of the pandemic, 117,500 people were supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, also known as 'furlough', (86,400) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS - 31,100). The furlough scheme ended on 30 September 2021 and the last SEISS grant finished in October 2021.

The percentage of working age people living in East Sussex accessing furlough payments (27.2%) was broadly in line with the regional (27.8%) and national (27.4%) averages. A greater proportion of people in East Sussex received SEISS payments (9.8%) than regional (7.5%) and national (7.1%) averages. This ranged from 8.2% in Eastbourne to 10.3% in Wealden.

Volunteering

Just as being in paid work can be beneficial to health, so can volunteering. There is a strong correlation between volunteering and improved mental health, and some evidence to correlate volunteering with better physical health. However, there is some evidence that whilst volunteering can help to develop the skills required in employment, such as teamwork and communication, it has only a weak impact on the chances of finding paid work [\[Reference 11\]](#). A range of different factors are important to the chances of finding paid work, such as age and access to childcare. There is some evidence also that volunteering too regularly can have a negative impact [\[Reference 12\]](#) [\[Reference 11\]](#).

Volunteering programmes with specific employability aims may improve their success rate if the skills and experiences they provide are better aligned with those needed by employers [\[Reference 13\]](#) [\[Reference 11\]](#).

East Sussex has an active volunteering community. Figures from 2018 suggest that almost half of adults in East Sussex (46%) had formally volunteered in the previous year, compared to a national average of just 22% [\[Reference 14\]](#).

In addition to being valuable to the wellbeing of the volunteer, volunteering activities frequently benefit the wellbeing of the community. Issues of community concern which benefit from volunteers include health, skills and education, work, local environment, social isolation, and culture [\[Reference 15\]](#).

Case Study: Volunteering in East Sussex Libraries

Volunteers continue to play a valuable role in providing a rich and varied library service which is connected to the community. Volunteering can help individuals build confidence, develop skills and connect to their local community. We offer a number of roles; helping people develop reading and ICT skills, leading Rhyme-time and Storytime sessions, Reading Friends, delivering books to vulnerable people in their homes and supporting children and families in clubs for homework, study and coding.

“I have been a volunteer for the library service for years, I personally have gained confidence in working with the public and developed customer service skills. I have improved my understanding of libraries and gained more digital skills. In addition, I have had the satisfaction of supporting people in developing their I.T. skills. I have also had further training that has given me more confidence, for example, I have supported a visually impaired customer and learnt about assistive technologies. It has been great to meet a variety of new people. I feel that I have made a valuable contribution to the service and community.”

Matthew - Volunteer, East Sussex Libraries

Work and Ageing

East Sussex has a much older age profile compared to England and the South East. More than a quarter (26%) of the county's population is aged 65 or over (sixth highest of all County Councils / UA in the country), compared to 19% in England and 20% regionally. The median age in the county is 48.4, compared to the national average of 40.2. Only 17% of the county is under 16, compared to 19% nationally and in the South East.

Although the working age typically refers to those up to 64 years, state pension age varies by year of birth. People receiving their state pension for the first time in 2022 will be 66, born in 1956, and by 2039 the state pension age will have risen to 68 years. The number of older men and women in employment has been increasing since the 1990s. Around 11% of over 65 year olds in the South East are working (13.3% of men and 9.1% of women), equivalent to around 16,070 people [\[Reference 16\]](#).

Extending working life into older age may be beneficial for overall health and physical health, particularly for people in high quality, high reward jobs who can reduce their hours to work part time. However, working in low quality or low reward jobs appears to have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of older workers [\[Reference 17\]](#).

Longer working lives, coupled with changes in technology and working practice necessitates individual training and skill development throughout the working career, to ensure that older adults continue to have access to high quality, health promoting jobs [\[Reference 18\]](#). This, combined with an increasing average age of our population, means that retaining people in work as they age is also increasingly important for employers. Older people bring specific skills to the workplace including maturity, industry and life experience [\[Reference 18\]](#).

Work and life expectancy

Areas with higher rates of employment have higher life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in England. Predictably, areas in the most deprived 20% of the country have both lower rates of employment and lower life expectancy [\[Reference 19\]](#).

The number of years expected to be in work and in good health after the age of 50 differs significantly based on several variables; with those with less education and in manual occupations expecting fewer healthy years of work [\[Reference 20\]](#). Healthy working life expectancy is higher in the South East than England as a whole, but at age 50, is less than 11 years, meaning most people working to state pension age will expect to spend some of that time working in ill-health [\[Reference 20\]](#). In addition, poorer people are more likely to continue working past their previously expected state pension age than those who are more well off [\[Reference 21\]](#).

Those with the longest healthy working life expectancy are: [\[Reference 20\]](#)

- self-employed
- in non-manual occupations
- those with a tertiary education
- those living in southern England
- those living in the least deprived areas

Rural East Sussex

Using 2011 data, the Office for National Statistics estimates that 26% of people in East Sussex live in rural areas [\[Reference 22\]](#) compared to 17% of people in England [\[Reference 23\]](#). This can present specific challenges in relation to work. Nationally, a higher percentage of people of working age living in rural areas are in employment than people living in urban areas [\[Reference 23\]](#).

Businesses in rural areas have a different profile compared to urban areas, with an unsurprising increased focus on **Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing** [\[Reference 23\]](#).

Immediately prior to the coronavirus pandemic, a higher proportion of people living in rural locations were working from home than those living in urban locations [\[Reference 23\]](#).

Over the last 20 years productivity growth in rural areas has not kept pace with the England average. Productivity has fallen from 90% to 83% between 2001 and 2019. It is thought that this is as a result of growth in sectors found predominantly in urban areas, for example financial services, rather than a fall in rural productivity. As of 2020, workplace-based earnings were lower in predominantly rural areas than in predominantly urban areas [\[Reference 23\]](#).

People living in rural areas travel further each year than those living in urban areas, a higher proportion of journeys all made by car rather than public transport. Consequently, households in rural areas spend a higher proportion of their income on transport costs. Infrequent or inaccessible public transport maybe a barrier to accessing good work for some people living in rural areas [\[Reference 23\]](#).

Work and Health

Being in good employment is protective of health. The wider determinants of health, such as a person's social and economic circumstances and their level of education dictate to a large extent the opportunities open to them and the quality and types of work they are able to access.

Social mobility refers to the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Weakening these links can help to ensure that a person's occupation and income are not tied to where they started in life. However, research shows that there is a long way to go to improve social mobility [\[Reference 24\]](#) [\[Reference 25\]](#).

- **Occupation** - only 34% of people from working class backgrounds work in professional occupations, compared to 60% of those from professional backgrounds.
 - **Income** - those from poorer backgrounds are more than twice as likely to end up in working class occupations [\[Footnote 2\]](#) than those from professional backgrounds - with around 35% remaining in the same occupational group as their parents
- Free school meals - fewer than a quarter (23%) of young people who were free school meal (FSM) recipients when attending school in England were earning above the living wage by the age of 25. This compares with 43.5% of those who did not receive FSM.

Good Employment

The 2010 [Fair Society Healthy Lives \(The Marmot Review\)](#) report identified that understanding the role of the 'social gradient' in health is key to reducing health inequalities [\[Reference 26\]](#). This refers to the profound difference in health outcomes between those who hold the highest and lowest social positions.

This relationship holds true for those in and out of work. When in work, those at the lower end of the social gradient are more likely to be in low-paid, poor quality jobs with few opportunities for advancement. They often have poor working conditions that are harmful to health and many are trapped in a cycle of low-paid, poor-quality work and unemployment.

Amongst Marmot's recommendations for reducing the steepness of the social gradient was to "Improve quality of jobs across the social gradient" [\[Reference 26\]](#).

The characteristics of good work, for health are summarised below.

They include:

- a decent living wage
- opportunities for in-work development
- flexibility to enable people to balance work and family life
- protection from adverse working conditions that can damage health

2. Working class jobs refers to the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) groups 6 to 8. This includes semi-routine occupations, routine occupations, and never worked and long-term unemployed. Roles within these categories may include waiters, butchers, cleaners, bus drivers.

For work to support a healthy life it should:

Pay fairly and offer lasting security



In 2017, an estimated 6.2 million employees were paid less than the real living wage.

Ensure good working conditions



61% of workers in insecure employment have worked when unwell for fear of losing their job or pay.

Enable a good work life balance



Employees working long hours are 2.5 times more likely to have a major depressive episode.

Providing training and opportunities to progress



In work training can make people happier at work and lead to higher levels of personal wellbeing.

Source: [how is work good for our health | The Health Foundation](#)

Good quality work protects against social exclusion, which in turn leads to better health. Conversely no work, or poorer working conditions can pose a risk to health and wellbeing [Reference 27] [Reference 28].

More than 1 in 3 employees report being in low-quality work [Reference 29]. Of these, 15% report experiencing poorer health - which is double the proportion for employees who report no negative job aspects.

Health of the working age population

Long-term conditions are associated with social class and type of occupation

People in the poorest communities have a

60% higher prevalence of long-term conditions than those in the richest



Employees from



Unskilled Occupations
52%

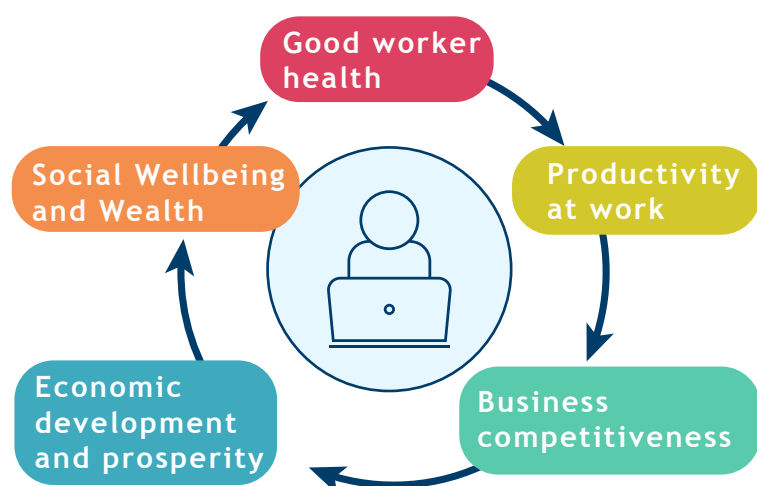
experience long-term conditions more than from



Professional Occupations
33%

Source: [Health of the working age population infographic | UK Health Security Agency](#)

Health and work cycle



A healthy and happy workforce has synergistic benefits for:



Workplaces



Productivity



The economy

Mental health and work

Being in employment reduces the risk of depression and psychological distress



Work can also be a cause of stress and common mental health problems

In the UK **17.5 million days**



were lost in 2018 to work-related stress, depression or anxiety

Young professionals have emerged as the most vulnerable demographic in the workplace.

They are twice as likely to suffer from depression compared to other age groups in the workforce, and more susceptible to leaveism and financial concerns.



Poor mental health costs UK employers up to



around
£45 billion

This consists of around:

£7 billion absence costs

£27-29 billion presenteeism costs

£9 billion turnover costs

Source: [Mental Health and Work | Publishing Service UK Government](#)

The Economic Case

The combined costs from worklessness and sickness absence in the UK equate to over £100bn annually, making a strong economic case for preventative action. Employers benefit as healthy staff are more productive, take less time off sick and may choose to extend their working life rather than retiring early due to ill health [\[Reference 30\]](#).

Investing in employee wellbeing can reduce absenteeism and staff turnover, saving between £130 and £5,020 per employee

[\[Reference 9\]](#)

Sickness absence is a high-level indicator of the way businesses support the health and wellbeing of their workforce. In 2020, over 118million days were lost to sickness absence in the UK. This figure, although staggering, is lower than previous years due to the number of furloughed workers during the pandemic [\[Reference 31\]](#). In 2020, the largest contributors to sickness absence were:

- Minor illnesses (26 million days) - this includes some COVID-19 related illness
- Other reasons (24 million days) - this includes some COVID-19 related illness
- Musculoskeletal health (MSK) problems (21 million days)
- Mental health conditions (15.9 million days)

Sickness absence rates in East Sussex are similar to England with 1.1% of working days lost to sickness. An unhealthy workforce will have a negative impact on society and the economy due to:

- Lost productivity
- Reduction in income tax receipts
- Increases in long-term sickness
- Increased informal care giving
- Increased healthcare costs

[\[Reference 30\]](#)

It should be noted however that often-low sickness absence rates come with high levels of presenteeism in an organisation (i.e. people working when they are unwell), as workers may not feel that they can call in sick and may return too early. Often when organisations start to address wellbeing, sickness absence can rise due to a reduction in presenteeism. Sickness absence when considered as a barometer for staff welfare should be considered alongside information too, such as staff surveys.

Characteristics of good work

1. Free of core features of precariousness, such as lack of stability and high risk of job loss, lack of safety measures (exposure to toxic substances, elevated risks of accidents, and the absence of minimal standards of employment protection).
2. Enables the working person to exert some control through participatory decision-making on matters such as the place and the timing of work and the tasks to be accomplished.
3. Places appropriately high demands on the working person, both in terms of quantity and quality, without overtaxing their resources and capabilities and without doing harm to their physical and mental health.
4. Provides fair employment in terms of earnings reflecting productivity and in terms of employers' commitment towards guaranteeing job security.
5. Offers opportunities for skills training, learning and promotion prospects within a life course perspective, sustaining health and work ability and stimulating the growth of an individual's capabilities.
6. Prevents social isolation and any form of discrimination and violence.
7. Enables workers to share relevant information within the organisation, to participate in organisational decision-making and collective bargaining and to guarantee procedural justice in case of conflicts.
8. Aims at reconciling work and extra-work/family demands in ways that reduce the cumulative burden of multiple social roles.
9. Attempts to reintegrate sick and disabled people into full employment wherever possible.
10. Contributes to workers' wellbeing by meeting the basic psychological needs of self-efficacy, self-esteem, sense of belonging and meaningfulness.

(UCL Institute of Health Equity, 2015)

Case Study: Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA)

Lou (58) was referred via Adult Social Care, in January 2021, during the national Coronavirus lockdown. Lou had no formal qualifications, lives with Crohn's Disease and had not worked, or accessed any formal education in 35 years. Lou had highlighted her need to seek advice regarding self-employment, housing, and finances.

As Lou was shielding at the time, SCDA supported her virtually to access the Citizen's Advice Bureau, for guidance with her Personal Independence Payments. Lou also attended local self-employment courses and was enrolled on and supported to access a Renting Ready Programme, delivered by a housing provider.

In June 2021, Lou moved out of temporary accommodation into a privately rented home and was then able to begin trading as a self-employed Alternative Therapist. Lou noted at her exit interview that employment had not only improved her health, but also her confidence and anxieties when in social settings. Furthermore, Lou's interactions with her family, as well as her meetings with friends and health support groups had also increased in frequency throughout her time with SCDA, and these were now a big part of her life outside of her work and something she looked forward to.

Penny Shimmin - Chief Executive



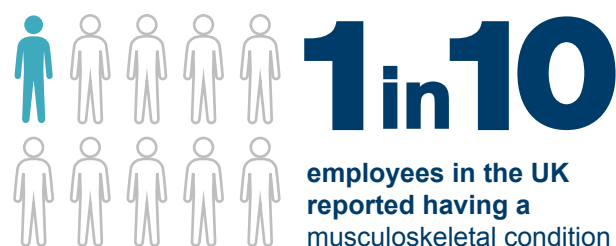
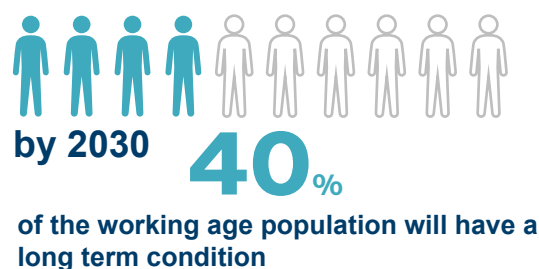
Health of the Working Age Population

The top three causes of long-term employee absence are mental ill health, musculoskeletal conditions, and work-related stress [Reference 32] these are often amenable to prevention. In the years leading up to the pandemic, the rate of self-reported work-related ill health was broadly unchanging. However, in 2020/21 work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health [Reference 33]

Long Term Conditions

Around a third of working age people in the UK, that's nearly 12 million people, have at least one long-term health condition. This is expected to increase to 40% by 2030. Based on this estimate, around 106,035 people in East Sussex have at least one long term health condition, rising to 131,400 by 2030.

- 1 in 4 UK employees have reported having a physical health condition. Of these, 1 in 5 also have a mental health condition.
- 1 in 6 adults will report experiencing a common mental health condition in the past week
- 1 in 10 adults have reported experiencing an MSK problem



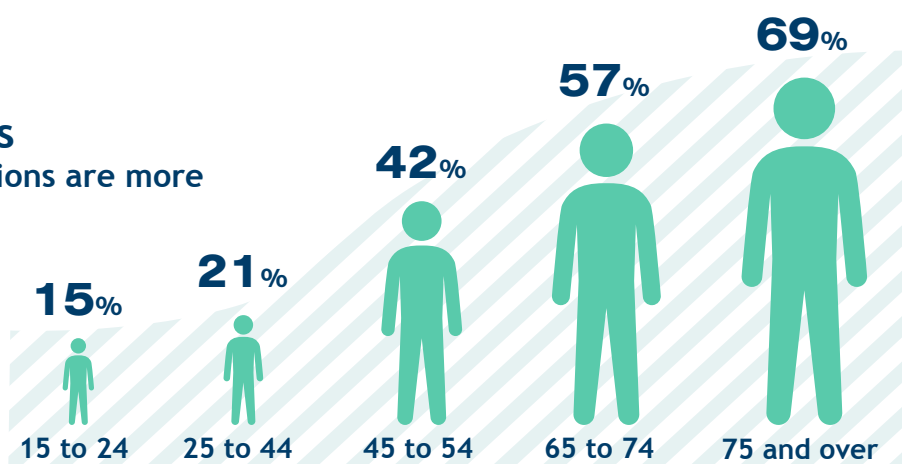
People who have a long-term condition report that their health is a barrier to the type or amount of work they can do, and they are less likely to be in work than those without long term conditions. The gap in the employment rate between those with a long-term health condition and those without in East Sussex is 9.5%, this is slightly lower than that of England at 10.6% [Reference 34].

As with other health inequalities, people in the poorest communities, and workers in unskilled occupations are more likely to experience long-term health conditions, compared to more affluent communities and skilled professionals.

Source: [Health matters: health and work | Publishing Service UK Government](#)

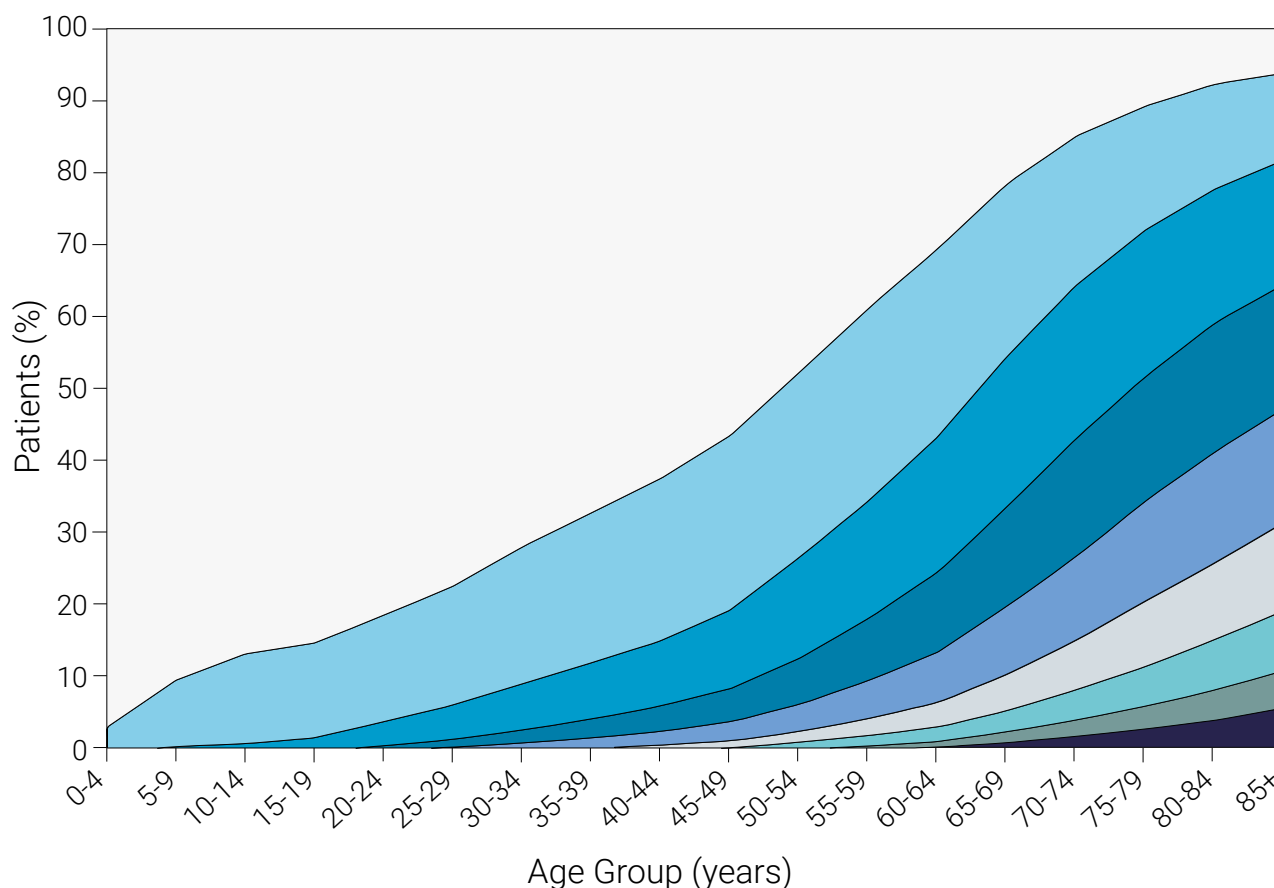
The number of health conditions people experience increases with age [\[Reference 35\]](#), and the more health conditions a person has, the less likely they are to be in work. This combined, provides greater challenges to employment as people age and develop more conditions.

Long-term conditions & limiting long-term conditions are more prevalent in older people



Source: [Health of the Working Age Population | Publishing Service UK Government](#)

Number of Long-term health conditions by age group



Source: [Epidemiology of multimorbidity and implications for health care, research, and medical education: a cross-sectional study | The Lancet](#)

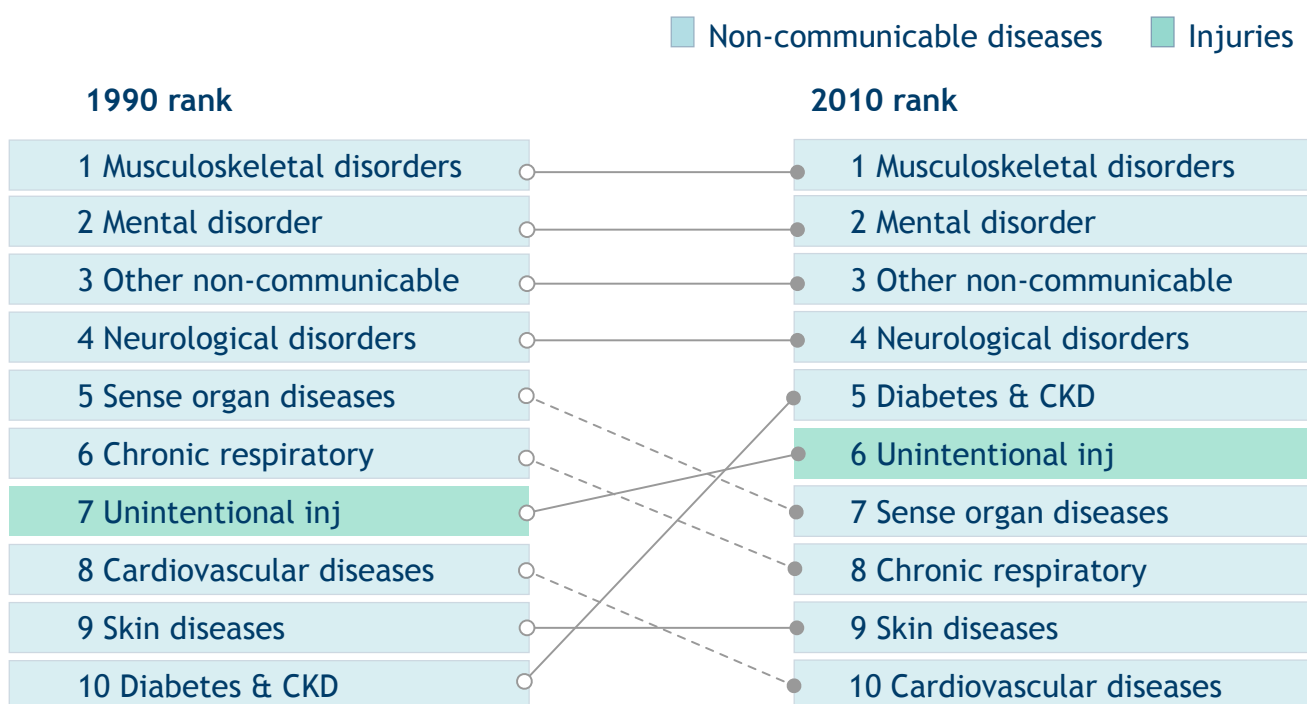
Musculoskeletal Conditions

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions are a group of conditions that affect the bones, joints, muscles and spine, and are a common cause of severe long-term pain and physical disability.

MSK conditions remain the biggest cause of years lost to disability (YLDs) in East Sussex, according to the Global Burden of Disease. [Reference 36]. This is true for the UK and Western Europe as a whole. They impact significantly on people's ability to work and are the leading single cause of sickness absence in the UK [Reference 31].

Implementing MSK workplace prevention interventions can deliver a return on investment of between £5 and £226 for every £1 invested

East Sussex: Both sexes, All ages, YLDs per 100,000



More than 1 in 5 people (21.4%) in East Sussex report a long term MSK problem, which is higher than reported across England, (18.6%) [Reference 34].

Other Key facts [\[Reference 37\]](#):

- People with MSK conditions are less likely to be employed than people without one.
- MSK conditions significantly limit mobility and dexterity, leading to early retirement from work, lower levels of well-being and reduced ability to participate in society
- The number of people with MSK conditions is rapidly increasing, due to population increases and ageing
- The disability associated with MSK conditions has been increasing and is projected to continue to increase in the next decades

Musculoskeletal conditions (MSK and) work

In the UK, MSK is a leading causes of work limitations and

27.8

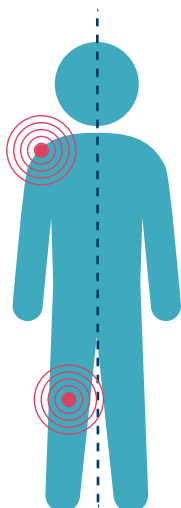


million working days
per year are lost due to MSK

People with MSK conditions are less likely to be in work than people without a health condition

63%

an MSK
condition



82%

no health
conditions



In England,

17%

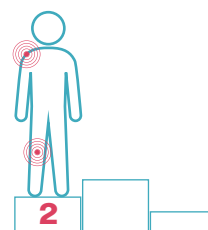


of the population report a long term
MSK problem

Agriculture, construction, health and social care, and transportation and storage industries all show elevated rates of MSK



**MSK is the
second largest
single cause of
sickness absence**



Source: [Musculoskeletal conditions \(MSK\) and work | Publishing Service UK Government](#)

Mental Health

Around 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life [\[Reference 38\]](#), and they are a leading cause of sickness absence in the UK [\[Reference 31\]](#).

Whilst work can contribute to good health and wellbeing [\[Reference 39\]](#), it can equally exacerbate a pre-existing condition or lead to new mental health problems. Employers can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of people in East Sussex by recognising the part they play in creating environments that support mental health.

Mental Health - Key Numbers

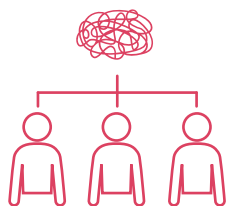
The scale of the problem for employers
Mental health issues in the workforce cost UK employers up to
£45 billion a year



This includes:

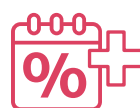


£9 billion in replacing staff who leave their jobs because of their mental health



The scale of the problem for employees

2 in 5 employees report experiencing poor mental health symptoms related to work in the last year



30% of the UK workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health conditions at some point in their life

Just **13%** feel able to disclose a mental health issue to their line manager

13%

51% of employees feel comfortable talking about mental health issues in the workplace



62% of managers faced situations where they put the interests of their organisation above the wellbeing of colleagues

Source: [Mental health toolkit](#) | [Business in the community](#)

Around 16% of adults aged 16 years and over are estimated to have depression or anxiety (2017 estimates, Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA, Public Health England [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA](#) | [Fingertips Public health data](#)).

People experiencing serious mental health problems are also less likely to be in work than those without them. The gap in employment rate between people in contact with secondary mental health services and people who are not is 69.1% in East Sussex, which is marginally worse than the England gap at 67.2% [\[Reference 34\]](#).

People with a mental health condition are three times more likely to have a 'long term' period of sickness, and this can reduce the likelihood of them returning to work and increase their likelihood of future unemployment. Whilst there are more people at work with mental health conditions than ever before, 300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem lose their jobs each year, a much higher rate than people with physical health conditions [\[Reference 40\]](#).

Case Study: Southdown Housing Association

Southdown Housing Association is a Sussex based not-for-profit organisation whose primary purpose is to offer vulnerable people the support they need to live a fuller life.

In partnership with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Southdown delivers the Individual Placement Support (IPS) model. IPS is recognised as best practice in supporting people with mental health challenges to secure or retain paid work. Embedded within Mental Health Recovery Teams across Sussex, our Employment Specialists help people to secure and retain paid work. Their support is tailored to individual needs, goals and aspirations.

“I needed support with my mental health and a big part of me getting back into the workforce was about self-esteem. I’d suffered from depression for a long time, a long time.

When my Employment Specialist first got in touch with me I went in with an open mind. She was great. We matched well. It was just what I needed. I really wanted to sort myself out - I was open, honest, and direct.

It’s a very personalised service. There’s a big difference between a Recruitment Consultant and an Employment Specialist. An Employment Specialist brings a complex skillset to the table. On the outside, a support session looks like a social get-together in a café, but a lot is happening. She had a variety of skills she could use to tailor her support, and she could think on her feet with what I brought to the session. She saw me in full flow, gauged it all, and steered it.

Working with an Employment Specialist really helped my confidence because I wasn’t out there alone looking for a needle in the haystack anymore. In between sessions, I was rebuilding myself, my strength, and my mental attitude. It’s been a very rich journey, very positive.”

(Recent service user)

The logo for Southdown Housing Association, featuring the word "Southdown" in a handwritten-style font, with a thick green horizontal line underneath it.

Work and Inequalities

Access to good quality work is both a driver and a symptom of wider inequality. People with protected characteristics are consistently disadvantaged in the workforce, affecting their ability to undertake jobs that are protective of health. Concurrently, those who are in precarious, poorly paid, or poor-quality work are more likely to experience disadvantages including worse health, worse access to healthy affordable food, and low-quality housing [\[Reference 29\]](#).

Types of discrimination (protected characteristics)

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

[\[Reference 41\]](#)

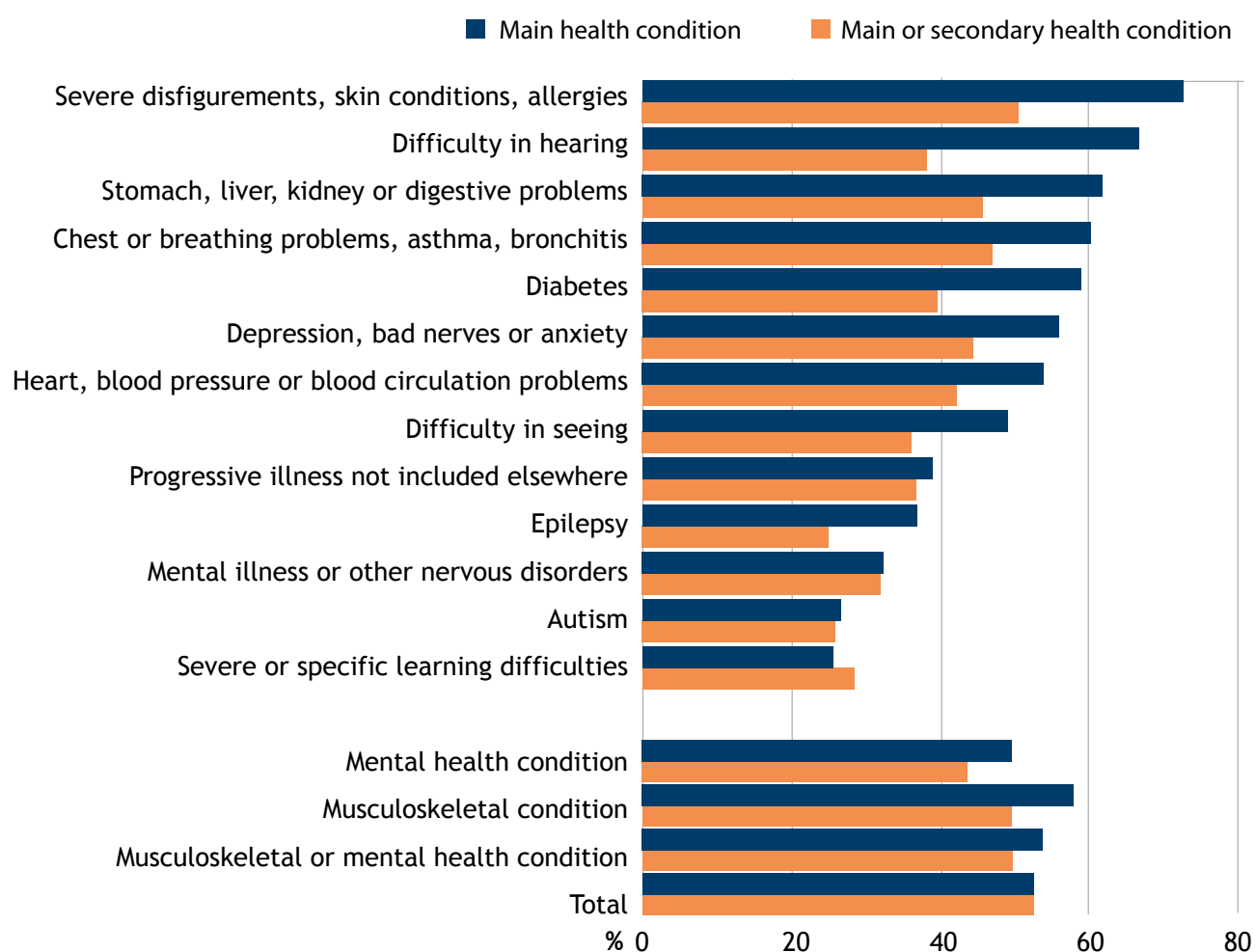
The Health Foundation reports that the UK's current high levels of employment has not resulted in a reduction in the proportion of people undertaking low quality work. Younger adults, people in more routine occupations, and members of black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to report low quality aspects to their employment which may then go to adversely impact other areas of their lives [\[Reference 29\]](#).

Disability

Disability is broad in its definition and, necessarily, the impact of having a disability on access to good quality work varies person to person. 1 in 5 of the working-age population are classed as disabled, a number which is growing, driven by an increase in mental health conditions [\[Reference 42\]](#). Disabled adults are less likely to be in work than their non-disabled peers, and disabled women are now slightly more likely to be in employment than disabled men [\[Reference 42\]](#).

The 2010 Equality Act defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to undertake normal daily activities.

Proportion of disabled people in employment by main or secondary health condition, people aged 16 to 64, UK, 2020 to 2021



Source: [The employment of disabled people 2021 | Department of work and pensions](#)

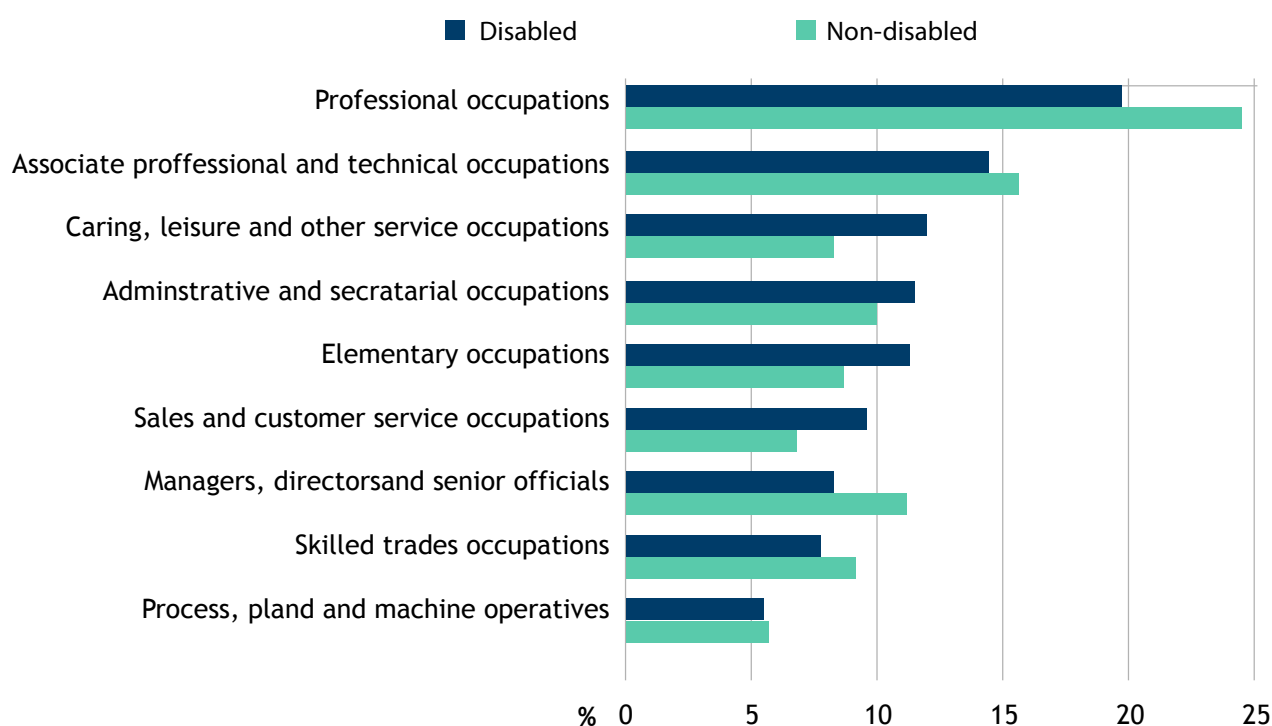
There are significant differences in employment rates between types of disability; people with severe disfigurements, skin conditions and allergies are significantly more likely to be in employment than those with mental illness, autism or learning disabilities. The difference in employment rate reduces with increasing qualification level [Reference 43]. Disabled workers are less likely to be employed in higher skilled occupations than non-disabled people.

The employment rate for working age adults with learning disabilities in East Sussex is 7.2%, higher than the regional and England averages of 7.0% and 5.6% respectively. In East Sussex, the employment rate for people with learning disabilities is 73 percentage points lower than for people without learning disabilities [Reference 44].

From an economic perspective, disabled people earn less than non-disabled people, and the disability pay gap estimates vary between 12.2-20% [Reference 45] [Reference 46]. The ONS estimates that around a quarter of the difference in pay between disabled and non-disabled people can be attributed to variance in qualifications and occupation [Reference 45]. TUC analysis suggests that disabled people are paid less than equally qualified, non-disabled, peers [Reference 46].

Other models of understanding disability such as The Social Model of Disability, have been developed by Disabled people. This model describes people as being disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. The social model helps us recognise the barriers that make life harder for Disabled people. These barriers are identified as being the physical environment, people’s attitudes, the way people communicate, how institutions and organisations are run, and how society discriminates against those who are perceived as ‘different’. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers Disabled people more independence, choice, and control [\[Reference 47\]](#).

Proportion of people in employed in each occupation by disability status, people aged 16 to 64, UK, 2020 to 2021



Source: [The employment of disabled people 2021 | Department of work and pensions](#)

Perspective : East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

We are proud of our diverse workforce, which is made up of 107 nationalities and different protected characteristics. We understand that the lived experience from different staff groups may differ in the workplace and we continuously aim to make improvements for all staff.

Over the past year we have introduced the (Dis)Ability & Health Passport so that adequate adjustments can be made for staff in the workplace who have a long-term health condition or disability. We also work with partners to ensure that disparities around race equality in the workplace are improved. This work was nationally recognised with the Sussex Integrated Care System being shortlisted in the 2020 HSJ Awards.

Steve Aumayer, Chief People Officer



East Sussex Healthcare
NHS Trust

Age

Younger and older adults are most at risk of experiencing age related inequalities in the workplace. For those under 30 and over 60 years of age, average weekly pay is lower than for 30-60 year-olds [\[Reference 48\]](#). This may be influenced by a lower minimum wage for workers under the age of 25.

Young people aged under 25 years account for three out of five jobs lost in the COVID-19 pandemic and have been slower than other age groups to recover [\[Reference 49\]](#). Over the course of the pandemic, the reduction in working hours for young people with no qualifications (34%) was five times greater for those with a degree level qualification (7%). In July 2021, one in 11 young people (aged 18-24) in East Sussex were claiming universal credit/job seekers allowance. This rises to one in six young men in Hastings [\[Reference 50\]](#).

For young people who have spent time not in education, employment, or training (NEET), the challenges faced when trying to (re)enter the labour market are greatest for those who have spent longest out of work or education [\[Reference 51\]](#). They also have an increased risk of hospitalisation and poor mental health compared to young people who are in work or education [\[Reference 52\]](#). Young people with multiple vulnerable characteristics including those with caring responsibilities and a lack of qualifications are likely to face more barriers in finding good quality stable work [\[Reference 51\]](#).

Amongst older adults, those from the most deprived quintile were most likely to respond to the recent increase in state pension age by continuing to work beyond the age of 65 [\[Reference 21\]](#). Older people are more likely to be working with a disability or long-term health condition and experience the disadvantages associated with disability [\[Reference 27\]](#). However, appropriate adjustments, for example the Centre for Ageing Better's Five actions to be an age-friendly employer may positively impact the experience of older people in the workplace.

Centre for Ageing Better's Five actions to be an age-friendly employer

1. Be flexible about flexible working: Offer more kinds of flexibility, manage it well and help people know their options
2. Hire age positively Actively: target candidates of all ages, and minimise age bias in recruitment processes
3. Ensure everyone has the health support they need: Early and open conversations, and early and sustained access to support for workers with health conditions
4. Encourage career development at all ages: Provide opportunities for people to develop their careers and plan for the future at mid-life and beyond
5. Create an age-positive culture: Equip HR professionals and managers to promote an age-positive culture, and support interaction across all ages

[\[Reference 53\]](#)

Sex

Despite legislation preventing discrimination on the basis of sex, there is clear evidence that women are disadvantaged in the workforce. In 2019 it was estimated that the average working-age woman in the UK earned 40% less than her male counterpart, and that her hourly pay was 19% less [\[Reference 54\]](#). Women undertake more hours per day of total work, but less hours of paid work [\[Reference 54\]](#). The gender pay gap increases significantly after parenthood and is particularly pronounced in lone parents [\[Reference 54\]](#) [\[Reference 26\]](#).

Government research published in 2019 highlighted that mothers are more likely to withdraw from full-time employment compared to fathers after having children and for those who do return to work, their career progression often stalls with a lower chance of promotion [\[Reference 55\]](#).

Women are consistently more likely than men to have reported experiencing sexual harassment at work within the last 12 months [\[Reference 56\]](#), and women under the age of 35 are more likely to report harassment coming from a more senior individual [\[Reference 57\]](#). Most people who experience workplace sexual harassment do not report it, and frequently cite affecting career progression as a reason why [\[Reference 57\]](#). Intersectionality applies, with sexual minority and disabled women more likely to report some forms of workplace sexual harassment [\[Reference 58\]](#).

Men are more likely to experience fatal and non-fatal accidents at work, in part because of the differing types of work men and women traditionally undertake and differences in perception of risk, but women are more likely to be injured if working shifts [\[Reference 59\]](#).

Ethnicity

“Ethnic minorities in the UK are less likely to find good work than their white British counterparts, even when born and educated in the United Kingdom. While we know that ethnic discrimination in hiring is pervasive and enduring, it is not clear how much of the labour market disadvantage experienced by ethnic minorities can be attributed to employer discrimination” [\[Reference 60\]](#)

Despite higher university attendance amongst almost all minority groups compared to the white British population [\[Reference 61\]](#) people from Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic groups are consistently disadvantaged in the workforce. Adults from minority ethnic groups are at greater risk of precarious work, and less likely to have a permanent contract than white counterparts, which in turn increases the risk of poor mental health [\[Reference 62\]](#).

Occupational segregation contributes to a higher proportion of ethnic minority workers being paid below the minimum wage, and increased likelihood of being in the lowest paid work [\[Reference 63\]](#). This increases the likelihood of living in poverty [\[Reference 63\]](#). Curriculum Vitae (CV) studies suggest that people from ethnic minorities are less likely to be offered an interview than equivalently qualified white British people [\[Reference 63\]](#).

However, it is an oversimplification to consider all ethnic groups in the UK homogenously, and there is significant variation between groups influenced by cultural and migration histories [\[Reference 62\]](#). Some groups, including Indian and Bangladeshi men and Indian and Caribbean women, appear to achieve greater upwards social mobility than their white British counterparts of similar class background [\[Reference 64\]](#).

Data from the 2011 census found that Gypsy and Irish Traveller people had the lowest economic activity of ethnicities in England and Wales [\[Reference 65\]](#). 2011 census data indicated that a quarter of Gypsy and Irish Traveller people aged 16+ in East Sussex had never worked [\[Reference 51\]](#).

Sexual orientation, gender re-assignment and gender identity

There is evidence that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people experience inequality of employment and discrimination in recruitment, progression and increased harassment and bullying at work [\[Reference 66\]](#). One in five sexual minority staff have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues in the last year as a result of their sexuality [\[Reference 67\]](#).

LGBT people are at increased risk of violence at work, with one in eight transgender people have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues in the last year because of their identity. One in 10 Black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT staff have similarly been physically attacked because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, compared to three per cent of white LGBT staff [\[Reference 68\]](#).

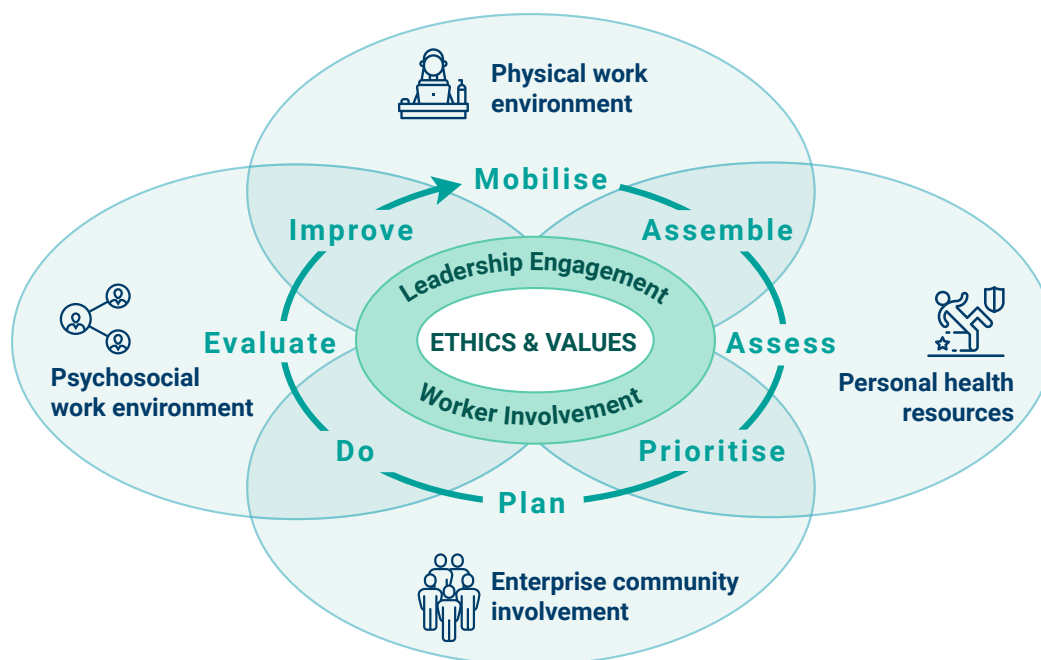
There is weak evidence that homosexual people may have higher employment rates, occupational levels and earnings than heterosexual people, however this is likely to be accounted for by other characteristics including likelihood of having children and educational attainment [\[Reference 67\]](#). Full time employment rates among transgender people are high, however an increased proportion of transgender people report not working for health reasons compared to heterosexual people [\[Reference 67\]](#).

Workplace Health and Wellbeing

The average person will spend 1/3 (90,000 hours) of their time at paid work over their lifetime [Reference 68], making workplaces one of the most important settings for actively promoting health and well-being.

What is a healthy workplace?

WHO healthy workplace model: avenues of influence, process, and core principles



According to the World Health Organisation a healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace [Reference 69].

The model considers the following

- Health and safety concerns in the physical work environment
- Health, safety and wellbeing concerns in the psychosocial work environment, including the organisation of the work itself and the culture of the workplace
- Personal health resources in the workplace, defined by support and encouragement of healthy lifestyles by the employer
- Ways of participating in the community to improve the health of workers, their families and other members of the community

Our health and wellbeing is influenced by the physical [Reference 70], psychological, and organisational resources available to us in the work place and the demands placed upon us in our home and work life. A mismatch between the demands of work and the resources we can draw upon to meet them can lead to stress and impact negatively on our wellbeing [Reference 71]. In terms of physical environment, there is evidence that office layout, furniture, lighting, temperature, and employee control can all play a part in improving employee wellbeing [Reference 72].

Get accredited with an East Sussex Wellbeing at Work Award!

The Wellbeing at Work Award recognises employers' commitment to supporting employee wellbeing through an accreditation programme. The programme is operated by Public Health at East Sussex County Council and provides a framework for improving health and wellbeing in the workplace.

East Sussex Wellbeing at Work is the county standard of good practice in health and wellbeing in the workplace. The programme will guide employers on a journey of health improvement through a framework of awards which contain specific criteria to achieve. The programme takes a holistic approach, covering the following topics:

- Physical Activity and Active Travel
- Healthy Eating
- Musculoskeletal Health and Health & Safety
- Mental Health
- Sickness Absence, Return to Work and Prevention
- Alcohol, Substance Misuse, and Stop Smoking
- Leadership, Management and Workplace Culture

There are a wide range of awards available for employers of all sizes. The scheme is open to every workplace in the county regardless of their current level of employee well-being support and experience.

Holding a Wellbeing at Work award will set your organisation apart as an employer of choice when it comes to supporting employee health and wellbeing, whilst also enjoying the benefits.

Once you have received an award, you will be able to say your wellbeing initiatives meet a certain standard in workplace health best practice, and you will be able to show this to your employees and clients/customers with our marketing materials pack.

[Wellbeing at work | East Sussex](#)

Wealden District Council receives wellbeing accreditation

The council is the first local authority in East Sussex to be accredited with a bronze in the Wellbeing at Work Award.

The award was presented to Wealden council officials by East Sussex County Council in recognition of Wealden's wellbeing initiatives and programmes that support staff wellbeing. This includes Coffee Roulette - a virtual coffee meets randomly pairing two staff members from across the company, cycle to work scheme, flexible working, and the introduction of mental health first aiders.



Safe and Healthy Workplace Legislation

From factory inspectors in the 1830s, to asbestos control in the 1980s, a variety of legislation has reduced the risks that we are exposed to at work. The rate of fatal injury at work in the UK has fallen significantly since the 1980s, from a rate of 2.4 deaths per 100,000 workers in 1988/89, to 0.44 in 2020/21 [Reference 73]. The South East regional data is slightly lower at of 0.18 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2020/21 [Reference 73]. Nationally, 441,000 people sustained a non-fatal injury at work and 1.7 million people suffered from work related ill health including stress, depression, anxiety, musculoskeletal conditions and occupational lung disease [Reference 74]. The most common form of workplace injury, accounting for a third of incidents is caused by ‘slips, trips or falls on same level’, with another fifth by ‘handling, lifting or carrying’ [Reference 74].

Source: [Health and safety statistics 2021 | Health and safety executive](#)

The three industries with the highest rates of ‘work related ill health’ are,

1. Public administration/defence
2. Human health/social work
3. Education

The three industries with the highest rates of ‘workplace injury’ are in the following,

1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing
2. Construction
3. Accommodation/food service activities

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 sets a duty for the safe operation of a business onto the employer, Section 2 [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 | Health and safety executive](#).

Health and safety regulations lay out the detail of the rules that businesses must follow. This is enforceable through enforcement notices or legal proceedings. A defined standard is set, and it is a legal requirement.

Guidance can be issued by government departments, professional and standards bodies on specific aspects of health and safety. Guidance shows the way to best practice, but it is not enforceable by law.

Home Working

Employers’ obligations to workers’ health and safety extends to the home environment. A risk assessment should be completed for each worker and cover use of display screens, stress at work, and the working environment. Employers should make sure home workers have somewhere safe to work, can use laptops and other devices safely.

Full advice can be found at [Home working | Health and safety executive](#)

Environmental Health

Local authorities, largely through the Environmental Health departments, are responsible for enforcing health and safety in about two thirds of all business premises in Great Britain, equating to around half the total workforce.

The role of the Environmental Health professional is to ensure effective and proportionate management of risks in retail and consumer outlets, catering, hotels, entertainment, call centres, leisure settings, warehouses and supply chain distribution. The Environmental Health professional will use both the Act and the regulations when they intervene in a business.

Case study: Life or Limb

Environmental Health Officers visited work premises, following a call from a concerned employer regarding poor health & safety practice. They identified several safety concerns but the most urgent was a 2m band saw operating without a brake. This large piece of machinery kept operating for two minutes when switched off.

A health and safety improvement notice was issued requiring the installation of a braking system. When Environmental Health Officers revisited the brake had been installed and overall standards of safety had significantly improved.



Ina Kane- Rother & Wealden Environmental Health



Health and wellbeing in the workplace guidance

Outside of statutory requirements, there is a substantial amount of guidance available for employers who wish to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace. These include,

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) - provides guidance and quality standards outlining recommendations for workplace health and wellbeing in the following areas:

- Long-term sickness absence and capability to work
- Management practices
- Mental wellbeing at work
- Physical activity in the workplace
- Improving employee mental health and physical wellbeing
- Physical activity and the environment (including places of work)

The full guidance documents can be found at: [Products - Workplaces | Topic | NICE](#)

Business in the Community (BITC) in collaboration with **Public Health England** have produced several health and wellbeing toolkits for employers.

- Musculoskeletal health (MSK)
- Mental Health in the Workplace
- Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Healthier Weight
- Reducing the Risk of Suicide
- Crisis Management in the Event of Suicide
- Sleep and Recovery
- Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco
- Domestic Abuse

The full toolkits can be found at BITC/Public Health England: [Take a whole system approach to well-being | Business in the community.](#)

Anchor Institutions

All businesses and organisations, large or small can take action to improve the health and well-being of their staff. The larger the organisation, the greater the potential to impact on health inequalities.

Anchor institutions are, as indicated by their name, large organisations rooted in local communities that are unlikely to move away. They have the capacity to influence the wellbeing of their populations through their roles as an employer, purchasers, and providers of services [Reference 75].

Although they are frequently public sector organisations, their status as anchor institutions is marked by an organisation's connection to and investment in the long-term health and development of their areas.

These organisations can intentionally orientate their employment and procurement practices to support the places where they operate. They can use their assets and resources to enhance social and economic conditions.

For example, a recent roundtable hosted by the NHS, and including industry representatives explored how NHS and the private sector can work in partnership to further reduce health inequalities. They identified the 10 areas detailed in the infographic below [Reference 76]. This sections that follow explore some of these themes.



Source infographic: [10 ways businesses can help to reduce health inequalities | NHS England](#)

Climate Change

In 2019 the UK was the first major economy to commit to a legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, in line with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Committee on Climate Change (CCC).

Employers have a significant role to play in helping to reach this target.

Sustainable development:

“Development that meets the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs”

(World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

Transitioning to an environmentally friendly business model can be challenging and may deter some businesses, especially smaller ones. However, there are steps that employers can take to marry the ambitions they have for promoting the wellbeing of staff with their wider responsibilities to the environment.

Examples of these ‘co-benefits’ include:

- supporting a cycle to work scheme benefits the employee’s health and is good for the environment
- working from home and enabling virtual meetings reduces unnecessary car journeys
- provision of electric charging points promotes sustainable car travel. Individuals can also play a part by considering their impact on the environment and how they can take steps to reduce their carbon footprint

The [East Sussex Climate Emergency Plan | East Sussex County Council](#) for 2022-25 describes the scale of the challenge but also the practical steps that a range of partnerships in the public, private and community sectors will take to reduce their carbon footprint over the next three years. It includes resources for communities and organisations to better understand their carbon footprint and identify what changes can make the biggest difference.

Procurement Practice

The [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012 | Legislation UK Government](#) came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider health, wellbeing, social, economic, and environmental benefits. Before starting the procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

The Act is a tool to help commissioners get more value for money out of procurement. It also encourages commissioners to talk to their local provider market or community to design better services, often finding new and innovative solutions to difficult problems.

Perspective East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

Being at the heart of the community we can offer a wide range of health and social career pathways through our extensive connections with healthcare partners and our community groups. We have growing interest from a wide range of groups including 'Restless' for the over 50's, the Armed Services Network and have secured funding for eighty Kick Start places. East Sussex Healthcare Trust is rich with a wide range of national and international emerging talent which makes our Trust inclusive, innovative and visionary.



Action in East Sussex

Employers have been dealing with enormous challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst interest in employee health and wellbeing was already on the rise, the pandemic has thrust it to the top of the corporate agenda. In 2021 three-quarters of employees believed that senior leaders have employee wellbeing on their agenda, up from 61% in 2020 [\[Reference 77\]](#). Although this is a positive change, there is still some way to go for employee wellbeing to be high on the agenda in every organisation.

The pandemic presents a unique opportunity to take stock and shape a new future for work, where health and wellbeing is embedded throughout an organisation's practices, and to ensure preventative health and wellbeing is embraced to build a resilient, productive workforce.

Impact of COVID-19

Work and Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about wide scale changes to working practices in East Sussex and across the world. The impact of some changes, such as job loss, job insecurity and furlough, appears to be reducing as time passes. Other working practices, such as the rise in home working, seem more likely to stay. Many workers who have been deemed essential have continued to travel to their place of work, yet often under increased pressure and demand, as well as new protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In terms of workplace health, the gap between those who are in good and bad employment may have widened. Research conducted in the first year of the pandemic found that employers who were already supportive of employee's health and wellbeing continued to provide support through the crisis. However, employers who were not supportive continued to fail their workforce, disproportionately affecting vulnerable employees [\[Reference 78\]](#).

The significant swing towards homeworking initially increased demands on employees and exacerbated work-related stress. Whilst remote working has now become the 'new normal' and is likely to continue for many, it still presents challenges for both employees and employers. However the path out of the pandemic is unclear and the long-term implications for working conditions and health won't be fully understood for some time.

Perspective : Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA)

Work and Health programme participants can be categorised by how close they are to the job market. The **progressing group** are those who are looking for work but are still trying to manage their barriers to employment with the support of SCDA. Before COVID-19 this was the largest percentage of our caseload and has since increased but with a noticeable difference in the barriers to work.

Previously the trends identified were participants wanted to work but may have not had the skills required (e.g. low education levels), low levels of experience or were not well enough to commit to returning to work.

Those barriers are still present, but there have been additional barriers to work identified with the pandemic. There has been an increase in the reluctance of participants to look for jobs that are active in today's job market, with so many industries removing their vacancies or drastically changing the contracts (zero hours contract, fixed term). Many participants have opted out of looking at alternative careers instead wanting to wait for the job market to change.

Participants with health conditions are not only concerned about how their own health could be affected with going into work. As a result of the pandemic they are now considering the impact it could have on their families, especially if they are living with someone who is vulnerable to COVID-19.

With 80% of the caseload relying on public transport to take jobs, this again has been an additional concern for participants as they want to avoid travelling on a bus or train. Instead many of those participants have informed their support manager they only want to look for work in their local area. All of these different aspects play a part in participants decision making to apply for a job and as a result has restricted their job prospects.

Those participants who are keen to find employment despite their barriers have found employment. However, those who were already nervous about moving to work has brought increased challenges for the delivery team.

Penny Shimmin - Chief Executive



Working Well From Home

In order to learn how best to support people to effectively work at home, a collaboration between the University of Sussex, Team East Sussex, East Sussex County Council, Locate East Sussex and local business consultants undertook the 'Working Well From Home' (WWFH) project.

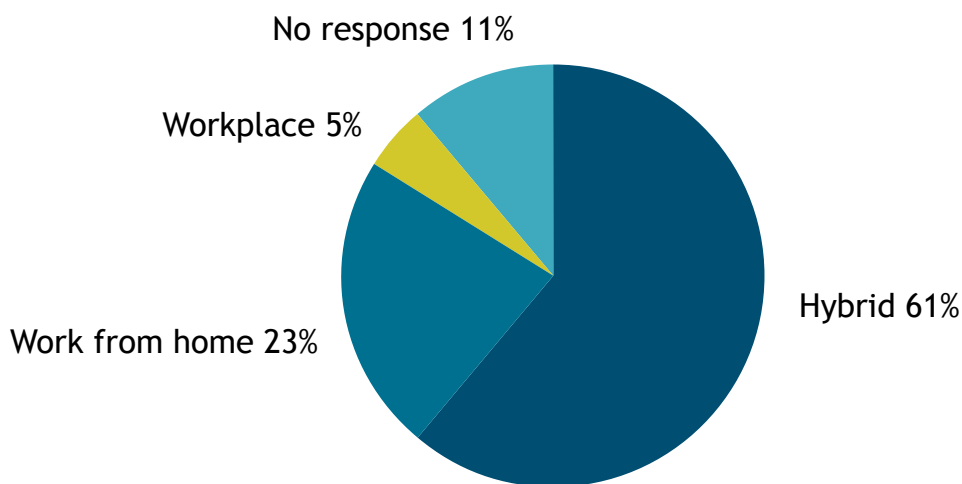
The project comprised a survey of local need, a literature review and interviews. The findings were combined to produce a Best Practice Toolkit for employers when navigating home-working procedures with their employees.

Key survey findings:

- Undertaken May 2021 - employers, employees, and self-employed living and/or working in East Sussex
- Included questions about homeworking experiences and support needs
- Areas of interest - mental and physical health, technology, and working relationships
- 263 survey responses, 5 in depth interviews (4 employees, 1 employer).

Note: The participants were majority female, white British, and employees rather than employers

Respondents were asked what their preference for working practice would be going forwards.



Most survey respondents reported that they either wanted to continue homeworking fulltime or that they would want a flexible hybrid model of working. As such, it is important that organisations consider the long-term model of homeworking which considers the practicalities, such as office equipment and health and safety, as well as physical and mental wellbeing.

This research has identified key areas of practice that can be adopted by organisations to help provide this support. These suggestions are outlined in the 'Toolkit' on the next page:

Working Well From Home - Best Practice Toolkit

Take home messages	Practical suggestions
One size does not fit all It can be harder to spot when someone is struggling when people are working from home	Employers may benefit from understanding the individual environment of each of their employees to provide personalised guidance and support Make sure that policies are generated for workplace assessments and health & safety as part of home working Ensure that all employees have the appropriate equipment and that it is set up correctly, including technology and office furniture
Staff concerns about confidentiality of personal information Access to technology which provides flexible home working should not encourage employee to work more or outside of 'hours'	Provide staff with reassurance that information regarding their mental and physical health will not be shared and will not affect their career prospects Support for physical and mental health should be varied and include both online support and face to face activities
Supporting the need for support at home	Good line management should include regular checks ins on how people are managing with work, workload, and wellbeing Particular support with cohesion is needed with the integration of newer staff members
Home working should not mean more working	Make sure home workers know what markers of productivity are -set clear expectations Support and encourage employees to take regular breaks away from their workstations - this is important for physical and mental health Attempt to create separation between work and home at some point every day - turn off notifications, silence phone or pack work away.
Home workers would like physical and mental health resources	Signpost to resources that support both mental and physical health Ask employees about their preferences for social activities

Perspective: Locate East Sussex

Recent research shows that a quarter of small businesses will stick with working from home until at least April 2023. The analysis shows that the money saved by not having to pay for office space has prompted the decision, with businesses with fewer than 50 employees saving an average of nearly £4,000 a month by not having to pay for an office. The report, which polled more than 1,000 small business owners, found that one in four had plans to continue working entirely from home until at least April next year, while a similar proportion plan to use hybrid working.

This comes despite the Government changing its guidance on remote working and lifting working from home restrictions. Once the option of returning to a fixed workplace had been “put back on the table once again,” it might have been expected that most firms would take up this option and return to “normal.” However, this research reminds us that it may not be the perfect solution for everyone, as with every business decision that owners make, particularly over the past 18 months, a range of factors need to be taken into consideration first, with the bottom line understandably often given a heavier weighting.

In a recent survey of businesses by Locate East Sussex, all respondents stated they were returning to the workplace, as they felt it was necessary to ensure all aspects of the business was treated the same, across manufacturing and administration.

These surveys would show a marked difference in opinion depending on the type of business and its needs. Manufacturing businesses have no choice but to return as that is where the machinery is located.”

Brett Pearson



**>LOCATE
EAST SUSSEX**

Employment and Skills

The employment rate has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the economy emerges from the events of the last two years, there is a need for renewed focus on ensuring that the workforce have the skills needed by employers to aid economic recovery and sustain future growth.

Pre-pandemic, the world of work was already changing, and the pandemic has accelerated the trend further. Building closer local links between employers, further education and higher education providers will be important to meet these needs. There will be a need for opportunities for mature learners to re-skill and upskill so that they are not left behind in the post-COVID-19 economy [\[Reference 79\]](#).

Before the pandemic the labour market and economy faced challenges including skills gaps, inequalities, and systemic issues for groups like:

- younger workers
- workers over 50,
- minority ethnic groups,
- lone parents,
- those with health needs or caring responsibilities,
- low paid and
- disabled workers

[\[Reference 80\]](#)

Many of the same people experienced the largest employment upsets of the pandemic. The Resolution Foundation found that people aged 18-24-, the lowest paid, those in insecure jobs, and those working in leisure and hospitality were most likely to lose their jobs, be furloughed or lose hours and pay. [\[Reference 81\]](#).

As of December 2021, at a national level, the pandemic had a greater impact on employment rates amongst younger workers and those over the age of 65, with these two age groups most likely to have left employment. People claiming out of work benefits in 2021 increased compared to the same period the previous year [\[Reference 82\]](#).

Precarious work

Precarious workers, those on low pay and with few employment rights, including people working in the gig economy, have suffered disproportionately from the pandemic through being more likely to contract COVID-19 because of the difficulties in social distancing and through erratic employment [\[Reference 83\]](#).

Retail, hospitality, arts, and entertainment sectors have also been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Significantly higher proportions of employees who were furloughed were from these sectors, they may also have a higher proportion of freelance workers who may have been ineligible for Government support [\[Reference 84\]](#). There is evidence that self-employment in the arts or gig economy is often the cause of psychological distress because it is economically precarious [\[Reference 85\]](#).

Freelance work

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in partnership with the East Sussex Arts Partnership and the South Downs National Park, convened a learning programme in 2020 to listen and learn from issues raised by freelancers and Black and minority ethnic cultural workers to support pandemic recovery.

Findings from this programme suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected freelancers. The business models of freelancers and micro-businesses were not clearly understood at government level. It is thought that this may have a national impact on advocating change, informing new ways of working and ensuring support packages are appropriate; such measures are required to support the future of a healthy sector. It was also identified that freelancers often lacked an understanding of the systems and structures of the cultural sector, for which the system itself must take at least some responsibility.

This points to a need to ensure freelancers are given the agency and voice to influence and be part of the decision-making processes through distributed leadership, shared policy development and partnership.

Perspective: South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Going to the office may take on a whole new meaning. A You Gov survey published in the Times at the end of January 2022 found that 71% of people preferred working from home and 58% believed they were more productive when they did. Only 9% of people had returned to their desks permanently while 26% had returned part-time.

COVID-19 has changed the way many in office-based roles will work for ever. This has exciting possibilities for improved and flexible lifestyles and shared care, less travel weariness, stronger community involvement and bonding, and a boost for local supplier businesses and high street.

But there is a downside. Those casual ‘coffee break’ network moments will require active cultivation, cross-fertilisation of ideas sparking from casual encounters will fade and we will all need to build our social and business networks in different ways. The young will be particularly impacted. Employers and the self-employed will need to be even more mindful of the problems and mental health risks of isolation and lack of human contact. Structured team gatherings will become even more important. Employers may need to intervene and assist with the quality and technology of the physical work environment at home.

Achieving healthy workers in a healthy workplace will need thoughtful support and scrutiny if we are all to enjoy the full potential of this extraordinary opportunity.

Graham Peters DL,
Chair Team East Sussex, Vice Chair



Skills and Work in East Sussex

People living in East Sussex aged 18-64 are less likely than either the national or South East average to have either GCSE level or post 16 level qualifications. There are regional differences within the county, and people living in Lewes and Wealden are more likely to be qualified to at least GCSE level than people living in Eastbourne, Hastings, or Rother [\[Reference 7\]](#).

In 2021, 95.3% of young people at academic age 16 (year 12) and 89% age 17 (year 13) were either participating in education, training or employment with training, or undertaking re-engagement provision [\[Reference 7\]](#).

Future Skills in East Sussex

As technologies, environment and the workforce change, new skills are required. Increased automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and the requirement for newer, greener technologies means that we will see significant changes in the types, and possibly quantity, of jobs available [\[Reference 86\]](#).

While some industries such as care, are likely to need ongoing human labour, others, such as medical professions, retail, logistics, construction, manufacturing/engineering may become increasingly automated [\[Reference 87\]](#).

The workforce is likely to need to problem solve, negotiate, be socially competent, equipped to use technology, and crucially able and keen to keep learning [\[Reference 86\]](#). For example, we have seen GP surgeries in East Sussex, which have largely been paper and telephone based, start using new technologies and systems in the past five years, and both medics and reception staff have needed significant training to update their IT skills so that they can switch to these new efficient systems. In our East Sussex care homes, care assistants now need to monitor patient care electronically, demanding IT skills alongside care competencies.

Creative and digital companies in East Sussex are already seeing great demand for high level digital skills (such as programming/coding) and this trend is likely to grow. Car mechanics is a significant employment sector for our local economy which has become a hugely changing field, with retraining in electrical car maintenance required for all existing staff.

Local training providers need to be able to adapt to meet the pace of change, to develop new curricular, access specialist tutors and purchase training equipment. Our residents need to be supported through a rapidly changing employment market where human (personal care/interaction/negotiation) skills, creative skills (making, performing, and creative technical - e.g. lighting) as well as higher level skills (scientific, medical, engineering) are likely to be those most prized in a rapidly changing world.

Workforce Challenges

As identified above, our future workforce needs a whole raft of key core competencies. Across all sectors there is a need for more entrepreneurial, leadership, management and digital skills. We will also need to consistently train our current workforce due to

the pace of change in the nature of work. The World Economic Forum estimates that upskilling and individual development will need to take place every six months in those industries with technical skills [\[Reference 86\]](#).

Research conducted by Nesta, Sussex Learning Network and the South East LEP (SELEP) has identified that there are immediate and longer-term skills shortages in a range of East Sussex priority sectors.

These include:

Health and Social Care

In the immediate future (1-5 years) there is a significant shortage of health and social care staff nationally [\[Reference 88\]](#) [\[Reference 89\]](#). For example, the proportion of health visiting vacancies in East Sussex has increased by a factor of 10 since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building and Construction

Economic Modelling Specialists Intl. (EMSI) data shows that East Sussex has a shortage of electricians, plumbers, carpenters, quantity surveyors, bricklayers, production managers, site managers and project managers. SELEP research undertaken by the MACE group show that major projects in London and Essex where substantial capital developments are underway, are drawing talent away from the county and leaving them short of labour. This shortage has also had a significant effect on the supply of materials and is placing pressures on those running construction Businesses.

Agriculture

Fruit picking and vegetable harvesting remains a concern locally and nationally, as it is estimated that 99% of seasonal farm workers have come from the EU in recent years [\[Reference 90\]](#). Viticulture, fruit and sweetcorn growers in East Sussex have suffered significantly and this seasonal work cannot be automated [\[References 90\]](#). Horticulture and arboriculture are growing sectors with skills shortages. As farming becomes more technical and automated, and as our viticulture and agri-food sectors flourish in East Sussex, there will be increasing needs for higher technical, science and engineering skills in the agricultural sector over the next decade.

Engineering and advanced manufacturing

EMSI vacancy data, verified by Skills East Sussex task group employers, shows that there are currently significant vacancies in a wide range of different engineering professions, from civil engineer, railway engineer, to mechanical engineer, as well as engineering and production manager roles. Skills shortages mean high salaries offered for those employed in this sector.

In the longer-term, engineering and manufacturing will offer solutions to our net zero future, with new opportunities in energy engineering, power networks, electric vehicle networks, giga battery manufacture. With the average age of engineers nationally

standing at age 54, and 19.5% of engineers currently working in the UK due to retire by 2026, leaving a skills, knowledge, and experience gap, this is an area of significant opportunity and growth [\[Reference 91\]](#).

Creative and Digital

Pre pandemic, this was a growing sector experiencing skills shortages. Web developers, software developers, IT support, graphic designers, videographers and coders were all in demand.

The pandemic has exacerbated this trend - with a shift to online working, retail, communication, and businesses in East Sussex are experiencing significant difficulty recruiting to these roles, with London businesses offering higher salaries and remote working opportunities. This is a sector that will continue to grow and expand over the next decade, particularly programming - and the sector will be crucial to solving issues relating to the net zero agenda [\[Reference 92\]](#). Roles in the creative sector (making and performing) are likely to become increasingly important for community, wellbeing and individual purpose, as are creative skills for problem solving, particularly if predictions that the number of jobs will decrease and there will be a shift to a living wage for all, including the 'non-employed' [\[Reference 93\]](#) [\[Reference 94\]](#).

Visitor Economy

The Institute of Hospitality for Sussex noted that Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic saw an exodus of visitor economy staff from the East Sussex economy. The sector suffered during the pandemic, and employment in the sector is currently viewed as insecure. However, there are good opportunities, with training in roles such as chef, front of house manager, and in hotel management, all of which offer excellent transferable skills.

In an evolving digital world, societies and communities that thrive digitally, can experience employability benefits, education attainment, better access to essential services, retail transaction benefits, and communication benefits [\[Reference 95\]](#). The pandemic highlighted and heightened the issue of digital access, basic digital skills, devices and connectivity. Computer and digital literacy is likely to have grown due to the increased need during the pandemic. A distinct need has emerged for digital skills and connectivity to access work and training [\[Reference 84\]](#).

Vacancies illustrate a continued need for management and leadership skills across all sectors [\[Reference 84\]](#). Professional occupations, caring and leisure occupations make up the largest proportion and there is a higher-than-average construction and manufacturing sector as well as in health, retail, education, logistics and IT. Due to the pandemic, there is a focus on supporting people into work, but in-work training is a continued area of need [\[Reference 84\]](#). The 'Kickstart Scheme', in which applications closed in December 2021, funded six-month work placements aimed at 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit and deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. In an evolving digital world, societies and communities that thrive digitally, can experience employability benefits, education attainment, better access to essential services, retail transaction benefits, and communication benefits [\[Reference 96\]](#).

Educational Institutions - post 16 schools and colleges

East Sussex is served by three colleges, East Sussex College Group (ESCG), Plumpton Agricultural College and Bexhill College as well as 8 schools with sixth form provision. ESCG and Plumpton Agricultural College both offer a wide range of vocational and technical learning and adult education provision. Sussex Council of Training Providers (SCTP) has a membership of over 100 Independent Training Providers, some offering pre-employment support, basic skills provision and others offering specific vocational training courses and apprenticeships.

The colleges, and SCTP, form part of Skills East Sussex, the East Sussex skills board, which is overseen by ESCC. The Board brings together employers from the county with education providers to ensure that learning offered meets current and future needs.

The Universities (University of Brighton and Sussex University) also form part of this work, as it is recognised that in future, higher level skills will be essential to career progression and for meeting the challenges of climate change and population shifts. The University of Sussex and Brighton also both offer adult apprenticeships, many developed in conjunction with Skills East Sussex sector task groups, to create new pathways into careers in, for example, construction and health.

The Government's Skills White paper [\[Reference 97\]](#) outlines a range of new provision which should create new opportunities for our education providers at Further Education and Higher Education levels to work together to address higher level skills challenges. A new Level 3 guarantee will mean that all adults will be entitled to Level 3 learning, while a 'lifetime guarantee' will offer adults of any age the opportunity to access funding to support them in achieving a higher level technical equivalent to a degree.

How ESCC supports people into work.

ESCC plays an important part as a strategic lead and facilitator in relation to the skills and employment agenda in the county. It brings together key players in skills and employment to better coordinate provision, maximise the impact of resources, and to prevent duplication. The Council employs 20 staff in its Employment and Skills Team, which works across all ESCC departments, from culture to procurement to public health, and oversees Skills East Sussex, the multi-agency skills board which sets the skills agenda in East Sussex.

Perspective : East Sussex College

Our curriculum delivery, particularly to adults, has certainly evolved. For many, access to virtual sessions has broadened access and we have seen a shift to shorter, online programmes as part of our £1million pledge to the people of East Sussex. Some skills and career enhancing short courses can be delivered effectively online.

We have seen a decline in enrolment on our adult leisure and in person courses. There has also been an impact on attendance for adults coping with greater family demands and periods of COVID-19 isolation. For some, career enhancing developments are not yet top priority.

Our sector-based work academy programmes provide short intensive retraining options for people looking to pivot into a new sector. These programmes have been designed and delivered in partnership with employers, employer networks such as Chambers of Commerce, the Department for work and pensions and Job Centre Plus to target those who are currently unemployed and provide a route into meaningful jobs.

There is broad recognition that COVID-19 has impacted on people's mental health across all sections of society but particularly the young which has led to greater engagement in our Mental Health First Aid Programme and Community Learning programmes supporting wellbeing.

Ultimately, the confidence people now have in online access will mean that we can attract far more engagement with skills development and therefore upskill and promote health and wellbeing. The focus needs to now be on ensuring that digital poverty and digital disadvantage is addressed in our adult populations to facilitate this even further and so we are doing more to promote essential digital skills, the provision of devices and access to our IT facilities to support."

Rebecca Conroy, Principal & CEO



The priorities of Skills East Sussex (SES) for 2021-2030 are:

1. Upskilling our workforce to minimum Level 3 (A level equivalent)

In order to do this, we need to see contractors, their supply chains and local employers mapping the skills levels of their employees, engaging in staff training programmes, including apprenticeships, professional qualifications, modular learning etc to move their workforce to a minimum of a level 3 qualification.

We also need to ensure that our future workforce is inspired to take up learning to a minimum of Level 3 that leads them into meaningful roles in our key sectors (Construction, Engineering, Health and Social Care, Visitor Economy, Landbased Sector, Creative & Digital).

To do this we need to offer careers guidance to raise aspirations and knowledge about the breadth of opportunity in the county, to make sure that our further education (FE) and higher education (HE) institutions offer the right curriculum - to meet the needs of business, provide work experience opportunities (including via the new T Levels) and make sure that our young people have the resources and skills (digital, employability) to pursue the learning and future careers.

2. Skills for a Net Zero future

This means ensuring that our East Sussex workforce has high quality technical skills, including immediate skills such as electric vehicle maintenance, retrofitting housing stock, solar and thermal installation etc but also that staff in our local businesses and our business leaders are climate literate - that business leaders and project managers are trained to consider the implications of their work and projects on the climate to identify ways of minimising negative impacts.

3. Enabling our FE/HE establishments to recruit excellent educators with specialist technical knowledge

Our colleges need technically competent engineers, construction workers, medical professionals to share their expertise as tutors if we are to secure future competent workforces. We need to encourage our businesses and suppliers to identify staff who retire, or who could be released for a day a week through social value offers, to teach in FE and HE settings. FE and HE settings can teach people to teach, but we need the industry expertise in our delivery of learning if we are to be able to inspire a new high-quality workforce.

4. Supporting the unemployed and unqualified

In East Sussex we have many people who have no qualifications. We need to ensure that there are a wide range of targeted interventions available to move this cohort into learning and work. Some are a long way from being work ready and will need specific pre-employment and work readiness programmes. Others just need to understand more about the opportunities available to them in the county, via adult careers promotion activity, to be given an opportunity and supported with moving into this. Wherever possible, employment opportunities such as Kickstart, Restart and Apprenticeships should be explored by our employers. Schemes such as sector Work Based Academy

Programmes, delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local training providers provide an excellent way to recruit to ringfenced positions for new staff. While programmes such as ESTAR, which supports specific cohorts of unemployed people (those living in supported or temporary accommodation for example) should be supported and built upon.

5. Improving our digital skills and digital inclusion

We need to make sure that post pandemic the East Sussex workforce and residents have access to ICT equipment and that they are able to use this. In work, we need to ensure that our staff have up to date digital skills, are able to use new vehicles for communicating and new systems and processes. We need to maximise the use of online learning, of Virtual Reality for training purposes, and get to grips with Artificial Intelligence and the uses of this. For our residents we need to make sure that they have the capacity to access ICT equipment, so that they can access services and also access online learning, job search, work from home, as these are outcomes of the pandemic that are here to stay.

6. Ensuring that national policy supports the delivery of learning and skills in East Sussex

Skills East Sussex partners and local businesses where appropriate will actively lobby government when policy is in development to ensure the best outcomes for East Sussex residents and businesses, and where needed will provide evidence to support a call for changes in policy.

The Council supports the delivery against these priorities, through a number of working groups including:

- **Six Sector Task groups** - bringing together employers, careers agencies and providers to devise courses and work together on careers and recruitment campaigns
- **Net zero working group** - employers within our new industries and local FE and HE training providers to consider new and emerging employment and skills needs
- **Careers Campaign group** - businesses and careers promotion partners (National Careers Service, Job Centre +, Reed UK, Twin UK) to devise campaigns and to create resources to promote careers in those sectors identified as having shortages.
- **Apprenticeships East Sussex** - developing new Apprenticeship frameworks and promoting Apprenticeships to East Sussex employers

The **Employment and Skills Team** supports all of these working groups with creating resources to promote careers and learning in the county, including the creation of www.careerseastsussex.co.uk which offers children and young people a wealth of information about courses, employment support and career pathways in East Sussex. The Team runs careers events for adults and young people alike and has created a wide range of infographics and video content to promote a wide variety of careers. The team commissions a range of labour market research and produces information bulletins and research documents to support and inform local providers to shape their careers advice, employment, and training provision in the county.

The Employment and Skills Team also includes a range of sub teams.

The Work Experience Team co-ordinates Work Experience for young people in years 10, in partnership with our secondary schools and colleges, to provide them with an insight into the world of work. 3,000 placements were coordinated in 2021.

The Careers Hub, co-funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company, works with all secondary schools and colleges in the county, to support their provision of careers advice. We work with over 150 representatives of local companies to provide information in schools about the range of jobs available in East Sussex and beyond, coordinate a range of careers events for young people, and run schemes such as Open Doors - where employers invite young people into their premises so that they can experience different working environments.

The ESTAR Team works to support those who are ex-homeless and living in insecure accommodation to access pre-employment support, training, therapeutic input and to move into employment and learning.

Recommendations

To conclude this report we have made the following recommendations that, if implemented, will help to improve the quality of work and health locally.

| Recommendation:

East Sussex County Council and our partners should continue to have the highest level of ambition and maintain actions to enable our residents, families and communities to achieve the best possible skills and access economic opportunities.

| Recommendation:

Employers should continue to build on their progress in creating employment opportunities and inclusive workplaces for those with protected characteristics and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

| Recommendation:

All public sector organisations and private businesses should be encouraged to sign up to work towards a [Wellbeing at Work East Sussex award](#). This will enable them to take advantage of the resources available on how to improve wellbeing in the workplace. Some of the ambitions and actions for promoting the wellbeing of staff align with actions to protect the environment and reduce climate change.

| Recommendation:

Employers are encouraged to undertake an annual workforce survey (also known as a health needs assessment) to increase their knowledge of the health needs of their workforce. This will enable employers to support their employees and guide them towards services to assist them in improving their health and wellbeing.

| Recommendation:

The local authority, along with other statutory and third sector organisations should continue to ensure that staff are aware of the existing range of employment support available in the county. They should share this information with individuals and promote the health benefits of working as an outcome.

| Recommendation:

Large organisations, including local authorities, NHS providers and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector should align plans and ambitions to fulfil their role as Anchor Institutions. The process and learning from adopting this approach should be shared with other large employers in the county.

| Recommendation:

Employers of hybrid or homeworkers should look to implement relevant practical suggestions outlined by the [Working Well From Home toolkit](#).

| Recommendation:

Individuals and groups furthest away from the labour market should continue to be supported by long term partnerships and initiatives that offer opportunities to enable them to develop skills and support them into employment such as those offered via the DWP, community organisations and local training providers.

However, these provisions need to consider health and wellbeing as part of their offer to participants, who may need support with mental and physical health needs, neurodiversity support, and support to build confidence.

| Recommendation:

National and local initiatives should continue to address current known gaps in East Sussex in Health and Social Care, Agriculture, Construction, Engineering, and the Visitor Economy as well as focusing provision on the future skills opportunities pertaining to net zero and new digital and automated technologies.

| Recommendation:

The many funding streams that support skills and employability need to be better joined-up to maximise impact and avoid duplication. The learning gained from the evaluations of employability projects about ‘what works best to support people into learning and work’ needs to be shared to inform future projects. Employment and skills funding is mainly short-term, and we need to influence funding bodies, including government, to provide long-term funding, rather than the current piecemeal approach.

| Recommendation:

Improving the published data and increasing the understanding of the health and support needs of Universal Credit claimants would enable partners to develop programmes to increase opportunities for employment, skills development, and volunteering.

| Recommendation:

A range of partners should continue to develop local initiatives that support the Skills East Sussex priorities and the implementation of the Government’s White Paper Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth. Increasing the number of those in the local workforce with a level 3 qualification, improving the technical vocational skills of local residents and improving the maths skills of adult residents without a Level 2 qualification through the new Multiply Shared Prosperity Fund are some of the immediate actions should be supported.

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Resources for Employees and Employers

Wellbeing At Work

Award Scheme

The programme includes an evidence-based award scheme which aims to provide the county standard for good practice in workplace wellbeing. The accreditation supports employers to create a happier, healthier, and more engaged workforce who will work efficiently together.

The programme supports and guides employers on a journey of health improvement through a framework of awards which contain specific criteria to achieve. The programme takes a holistic approach, covering the following topics:

- Physical Activity and Active Travel
- Healthy Eating
- Musculoskeletal Health and Health & Safety
- Mental Health
- Sickness Absence, Return to Work and Prevention
- Alcohol, Substance Misuse, and Stop Smoking
- Leadership, Management and Workplace Culture

There are a range of awards available for employers. All businesses and organisations of any sector based in East Sussex that employ more than 1 employee can join the Awards programme. The following awards are available:



These criteria within each award level were co-produced with local businesses and local topic experts, and the accreditation scheme will be robustly evaluated to monitor the effectiveness of the programme on health improvement of employees.

Further information available at [Wellbeing at Work | East Sussex](#)

Training

The programme offers a package of training to employers who are signed up to the accreditation scheme. The purpose is to improve knowledge in workplaces to support the development and implementation of wellbeing improvements.

Training for managers is particularly important as they try to balance the aims of the organisation with staff health and wellbeing. They are integral to driving change and often the ones who initially notice when a colleague is experiencing difficulties [Reference 98]. Courses currently offered:

Workplace health champion training - Based on the principles of Making Every Contact Count (MECC) this course, delivered in partnership with One You East Sussex, will give their employees the confidence and skills they need to promote local health and wellbeing services; have conversations with colleagues about wellbeing; influence senior leaders; undertake wellbeing activities and share stories of success. Once they have completed the course, champions gain access to a quarterly networking meeting hosted by the Wellbeing at Work team, where champions can access support; best practice examples can be shared; health campaign materials will be distributed and expert-led, topic-based upskill sessions.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) - A nationally recognised course that teaches employees in East Sussex how to help a colleague (or other person) developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or in a mental health crisis.

Managing mental health in the workplace (for managers) - this half-day course, delivered in partnership with Mind Brighton & Hove, considers the importance of Mental Health to individuals and to businesses, provides tools to help managers understand mental health issues and improve communication in order to better support employees at work and to manage absence.

General Support for Workplaces

The Wellbeing at Work programme offers a wealth of resources, available to all workplaces across the county for free. These are through the monthly wellbeing newsletter for employers which shares the latest useful resources, training opportunities and health campaigns.

Sign up to receive the newsletter and read past newsletter editions at [Wellbeing at work newsletter](#). The Wellbeing at Work website has [free resources](#) / guidance/ toolkits alongside [informative blogs](#).

Working Well From Home

These guidelines are shared on the [East Sussex Wellbeing at Work website](#), and animations and infographics will be utilised to disseminate the findings of the project [References 99]. East Sussex has few medium and large businesses (e.g. more than 50 people) and 86.4% of businesses in the county have fewer than 10 employees. Small businesses are less likely to have in-house human resources support, therefore it is crucial to provide information about how they can support their employees to work well at home [Reference 99].

East Sussex Climate Emergency Road Map for 2022-25

The East Sussex Climate Emergency - Road Map for 2022-25

1. For communities:
 - a. the 'impact' tool: [Community carbon calculator | Impact](#)
 - b. the 'place-based carbon calculator': [Place-Based Carbon Calculator | Carbon](#)
 - c. the Net Zero Navigator tool: [Net Zero Navigator Tool | Oneplanet](#)
2. For businesses: [Welcome to the Net Zero Hub | British Chamber of Commerce](#)
3. For individuals: [Footprint Calculator | World Wildlife Foundation](#)

Routes to Employment in East Sussex

There is a comprehensive range of provision available to East Sussex residents, that enables individuals to be supported into, and to progress in, work. Much of this is fully funded by Government or levy paying organisations.

Youth Employability Service (YES)

The Youth Employability Service (YES) is commissioned by ESCC and offers free support to young people in East Sussex. YES works with young people aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of being NEET, to identify options which allow them to re-join education, training or employment.

ESTAR

East Sussex- ESTAR - (Employability for those in Supported, Temporary, and Refuge accommodation) aims to support those who are far from the workplace into work. The project is co-funded by Adult Social Care and Public Health.

The 'Everybody In' government initiative and COVID-19 related rent arrears and eviction notices has led to a big increase in demand for homeless accommodation in the county.

The ESTAR project aims to

- to equip staff with an understanding of the training and work opportunities available to their residents
- brokers appropriate skills support for residents into locally available training provision
- address the broader needs of residents (incl mental health, substance misuse, employability support) to address significant blockers to employment

For temporary and emergency settings, Public Health also funds Wellbeing Advisers, who work with District and Borough housing teams to offer 1:1 support to residents, and when wellbeing issues are addressed, refer them into ESTAR identified provision.

Adult Education

Further Education (FE) providers offer a range of learning courses to help adults to be ready for work, further education, traineeship, voluntary work or an apprenticeship. Training can include full level 2 and 3 courses. Adults aged 19-23yrs can receive full

funding while adults aged 24+ may receive partial funding. There are some important sector based courses that are not fully funded such as CS cards which enable people to move into construction work or food hygiene certificates.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce. They offer programmes of in-work learning from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) to Level 7 (Masters equivalent) and are available to young people and to adults alike. Apprenticeships offer adults the opportunity to work and learn simultaneously.

The Government currently offers employers grants of £3000 for employing a new Apprentice. Apprenticeships East Sussex (AES) is the county's strategic body for apprenticeships, with the key aim of ensuring the growth of apprenticeships in East Sussex.

The role of AES is to provide oversight and coordination of key stakeholders, strategies and communication plans; horizon scan and identify change, challenges and issues arising; and where appropriate, will lobby collectively on behalf of apprentices, employers and training providers to ensure ongoing sustainability and growth of apprenticeships in East Sussex.

ESCC runs the 'Transform' programme in partnership with Sussex Council of Training Providers. This European Social Fund (ESF) funded project aims to address current and future skills gaps by increasing the take-up and knowledge of apprenticeships, traineeships and skills training amongst small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across the county.

Transform Advisors offer impartial, one-to-one advice and support and the project helps our SMEs access apprenticeship levy transfer funds made available to the project by East Sussex County Council.

DWP Restart Programme

This programme aims to support the longer term unemployed who are on Universal Credit into work through tailored programmes of support for up to 12 months. This can include; support to get the right certificates to take up a job in a different industry; bespoke training to take advantage of opportunities or to update skills such as in IT. In East Sussex this is delivered by REED UK.

Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS)

JETS is another DWP programme for people who have been out of work and claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseeker's Allowance for at least 13 weeks but have recently been employed. It offers light touch personalised employment support for six months which can include a personal adviser, help with IT skills, job search, CV writing, interview support, confidence, self-belief and self-motivation as well as signposting to skills support and other specialised help and training mental health and wellbeing support.

National Careers Service

This offers careers advice to any individual who requests it. In East Sussex it is coordinated by CXK who has also been active in supporting the ESTAR programme.

Other Opportunities

Alongside the Government employability initiatives, there are also SELEP European Social Fund projects in operation in East Sussex:

- TWIN training UK runs the Skills Support for the Unemployed ESF funded project, offering support into work provision for the unemployed.
- CXK runs a project that targets NEET and at risk of NEET young people in the county and aims to move them into learning, Apprenticeships and paid work.

There are also some short-term projects underway, funded through the Community Renewal Fund (the precursor to Shared Prosperity Fund) including 'Minding the Gaps' - a six-month project led by East Sussex College Group.

Sussex Community Development Association which aims to fund some of the short interventions (CS cards, Food hygiene) that are not currently funded by Adult Education Budget offers or other DWP provision above.

ESTAR

The ESTAR team has created a brochure of employability provision which is currently a PDF/paper document. This pulls together all free training and support that is accessible by the target cohort. Housing Teams, and Accommodation settings have found this resource to be very useful as a referral document for their residents, and it will soon be turned into an online tool on the [Careers East Sussex website](#). By comparing the needs and preferences of residents to the offers available locally the ESTAR team also identified a range of gaps in provision for the cohort, and fortuitously were able to access COVID-19 Outbreak Management Fund to pilot some employment schemes.

The schemes include:

- Moving on Up, delivered by a partnership of training and community sector organisations in conjunction with ESTAR. MOU supports individuals through employability tasters, mentoring and 1:1 support, short courses where required, into paid employment - with training. This could be an Apprenticeship or a job which includes a programme of training additionally. Once in work, the individual is provided with three months of mentoring support and is helped to move into independent accommodation.
- Leisure for life, delivered in partnership with the local leisure centres. This scheme offers individuals leisure passes for three months, and as a follow on, short courses in first aid, lifeguarding and other sports and leisure related learning. The provision is offered as physical wellbeing has a positive impact on mental health and confidence and these are crucial first steps in the journey towards employment.
- Grow your future, is a programme delivered with Plumpton Agricultural College and in partnership with local companies who maintain public spaces. The scheme offers people the chance to undertake therapeutic horticulture provision, in conjunction

with a level one horticulture certificate as they work and learn while making improvements to East Sussex green spaces. We have already seen two ex-rough sleepers move into employment with local horticulture companies as a result of this programme; proof of the benefits of combining learning with therapeutic and mentoring support.

Update from 2019/20 DPH Report: Health and Housing

The previous [2019/20 DPH Report Health and Housing](#) presented a holistic overview of the impact of housing on health. It includes the evidence base and who is most at risk; the East Sussex housing picture, including the housing stock and tenure; a description of the East Sussex Housing System, in relation to organisation roles and responsibilities; and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

The strategic recommendations are:

- To make all housing and neighbourhoods healthy
- To make all homes healthy
- To make people healthier in their homes (and support people who are homeless and rough sleepers)

The report was released just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since April 2020 there have been a range of developments in line with the findings and recommendations in the report. Some of these were pre-planned; and others were enabled as a direct result of the pandemic, largely the Everybody In mandate whereby local authorities were supported to accommodate as many rough sleepers as would take up the offer, in order to protect them from COVID-19.

A summary of the key changes since the release of the report is outlined here:

New Services as a result of COVID-19

- Trauma informed model of care

The Rough Sleeper Initiative is a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team that works across the county supporting people who are rough sleepers to take up accommodation and the range of support services on offer. These include mental health, substance misuse, physical health and dental services. With the Everybody In mandate, the very vast majority of entrenched rough sleepers were supported into accommodation. Trauma informed care is an evidence based model that places the treatment of trauma at the heart of the way in which services are provided. By expanding the RSI to include a Clinical Psychologist and two Community Mental Health workers, clients are best supported to engage with the services they are offered.

- New employability and skills service for people living in temporary accommodation and refuges

The new ESTAR service (see section on skills and employability) was co-designed by Skills East Sussex, Public Health and Adult Social Care due to the impact of COVID-19 on increasing levels of homelessness, people in refuges, and those who are under/unemployed. The ESTAR service provides brokerage across a range of skills providers and has designed bespoke offers for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in supported accommodation and in refuges.

- New holistic Housing and Well-being service for people in temporary accommodation and those at risk of being homeless

The new Housing and Well-being Co-ordinators provide holistic health and wellbeing assessments for people living in temporary accommodation and for those who are at risk of being homeless. Co-located in the housing teams, they assess and signpost people for a range of wellbeing, health, employment and skills interventions, including liaison with ESTAR.

Other new developments

Re-structure of ESHOG and new subgroups

The previous East Sussex Housing Officers Group has been replaced with a new East Sussex Strategic Housing Group. There are several new subgroups that have been created including a new Homelessness, Health and Support Group; a subgroup for housing standards; and one for housing development. The subgroups will all report into the strategic group which in turn reports to East Sussex Chief Executives Group

New Spatial Planning for Health team in the Public Health team

Public Health have created a new sub-team dealing with spatial planning for health. This team work closely with planners at district and borough, as well as county level to support healthy place-making. The team also support on the Health in all Policies agenda.

Continuation and development of Warm Homes and Childhood Accident Advice and Prevention Service

The Warm Homes and Childhood Accident Advice and Prevention Services continue to develop and expand to keep vulnerable people safe from harm.

Update from 20/21 DPH Report: 2020 A Year of COVID-19 in East Sussex

The previous annual report by the Director of Public Health for 2020/21 was [2020: A Year of COVID-19 in East Sussex](#). The report focused very much on the first year of COVID-19. Since then, the UK has mobilised a vaccination programme, experienced several waves of infection and subsequent variants of the virus. There has also been an easing of restrictions introduced by the Government to manage the impact of the virus. Now in 2022, we are continuing to remain vigilant, with information and advice available on how to live with COVID-19. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - help and support | East Sussex County Council](#)

We know that communicating with our residents was important during the COVID-19 pandemic. A weekly COVID-19 report and update by the Director of Public Health was published up until March 31st, 2022, when free universal testing for the public ceased. The council has used its communication channels, including a wide range of social media and print media, to ensure our residents received timely, accurate and reliable information about how to keep themselves, their families, and businesses safe and well during 2020, 2021 and the first part of 2022. Along with our NHS and VCSE partners we have extensively promoted local COVID-19 vaccination, support, and testing services.

COVID-19 drew further attention to the disparities in health and wellbeing between different groups in the county. It highlighted the familiar links between the conditions we live and work in and our health and wellbeing. As one council we continue to work on the wider determinants of health with our partners to ensure those that can influence local education, employment, economy, transport, environment, and our cultural sector understand their contribution and impact to improve health and wellbeing. This year's annual Director of Public Health report on work, skills and health demonstrates how we need to continue to work together with a variety of national, regional, and local partners on employment, work, skills as an opportunity to improve health. We will continue to work with our partners on the 'Levelling Up' agenda and ensure the recovery from the pandemic is equal regardless of ethnicity, age, and other projected characteristics.

There have been many lessons learned from the COVID-19 vaccination programme that will be used to inform planning across all the other vaccination programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic had and will continue to have, multiple impacts on our population's health and wellbeing. The council continues to coordinate action on a range of issues that affect our resident's health. The council, along with its NHS and wider partners, as part of the Sussex Health and Care Partnership, is actively implementing the [East Sussex whole-system healthy weight plan 2021-2026](#) and [East Sussex alcohol harm reduction strategy 2021-2026](#), and this year we have started work on a new tobacco control strategy. The County's Health and Wellbeing Service, One You East Sussex, has supported our residents flexibly over the pandemic to support them to lose weight, drink less alcohol, move more, and quit smoking.

The importance of protecting and improving emotional and mental health during COVID-19 was clear. This remains a key priority for our residents. Therefore, the council and its partners continue to work on actions to promote good mental health and ensure support is available. Full details are available at the [East Sussex mental health directory](#).

The council continues to listen to our residents to understand how our services can respond to their needs. Ourselves, with our partners have conducted a needs assessment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer plus population to further understand the health needs, the impact of COVID-19 on these groups and identify areas for improvement. The Council also launched the Community Wellbeing: Connected People & Places programme, commissioned in June 2021 by East Sussex County Council in collaboration with system partners including local authorities in East Sussex, the NHS, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and others. The programme aimed to identify key insights through a range of engagement activities seeking to answer the overarching question of “How might we develop a systems approach to tackling loneliness & social isolation in East Sussex”. These insights form the evidence base for a separate recommendations report.

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