Ref: Response to My Health, My Responsibility – Keeping Well & Preventing Ill Health

Healthwatch Report – September 2026

Dear Zoe,

Thank you for sharing Healthwatch Buckinghamshire's report exploring how residents keep themselves well and prevent ill health. On behalf of Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership and its members I would like to thank you, your team and, most importantly, the 430 residents who took the time to share their experiences and perspectives. I would particularly like to thank the South Asian women's groups and community settings who hosted focus groups, enabling us to hear from residents whose voices are not always well represented.

The report provides a valuable and timely insight as partners respond to the 10 Year Health Plan's shift from sickness to prevention. It is encouraging that almost everyone who took part recognised that their health is their own responsibility. The report also rightly highlights the real barriers many people face, including time, cost, caring responsibilities, cultural needs and not knowing where to find support, and the importance of prevention messaging that is supportive rather than judgemental. This evidence will help organisations across Buckinghamshire to work with communities, rather than simply for them, to make healthy choices easier for everyone.

We welcome the recommendations contained within the report and have carefully considered each one. Our formal responses reflect the work already underway across Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Thames Valley Integrated Care Board, Buckinghamshire Council and our partners, as well as our commitment to strengthening prevention and reducing health inequalities. Many of the recommendations align closely with our existing priorities, including our Neighbourhood Health Programme, Opportunity Bucks, early identification and management of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and increasing physical activity. Our response to each recommendation is tabled below.

Yours sincerely,

Raghuv Bhasin
Chair of Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership

Healthwatch Recommendation	Organisation	Response
Increase promotion of the NHS Type 2 Diabetes Path to Remission Programme and the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme to patients who may benefit from these.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners recognise the important role both programmes play in preventing type 2 diabetes and supporting people to achieve remission. The NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme supports adults identified as being at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and the NHS Type 2 Diabetes Path to Remission Programme offers a structured low-calorie diet programme for eligible adults who have recently been diagnosed. Thames Valley ICB will work with Primary Care Networks and GP practices to increase identification and referral of eligible patients, including through searches of practice records and as part of annual diabetes reviews. Recognising the higher prevalence of type 2 diabetes reported in the focus groups, promotion will also be targeted at communities at greater risk. As diabetes is a priority for our neighbourhood programme, we will use this work to raise awareness of both programmes and actively engage people who could benefit from them.
When creating information for people, consider how this will be delivered and the different tools and methods needed depending on who you are sharing it with. While online respondents preferred one-to-one conversations with health professionals and more information on the NHS app, the focus groups preferred more awareness talks in community groups / faith settings, videos about how to manage health better (and risk factors), and videos in different languages.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners agree that there is no single approach to sharing health information that works for everyone. Partners will continue to use a range of channels, including the NHS App and online information for those who are digitally confident; one-to-one conversations through NHS Health Checks, long-term condition reviews and Making Every Contact Count; and community-based approaches. Where possible, key information will be produced in plain English without medical jargon, in commonly spoken community languages, and in visual and video formats for people who may not read written information in any language. Partners will involve communities in developing and testing materials, building on the insight gathered through this report, and will ensure prevention messaging is supportive and non-judgemental, in line with the principles set out in the 10 Year Health Plan.
Continue to publicise the risk factors which can influence the chance of a person getting high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes (type 2).	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners, will continue to raise awareness of the risk factors for high blood pressure, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. This includes both the factors people can influence, such as weight, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, sleep and stress, and those they cannot, such as age, family history and ethnicity. This will be delivered through the NHS Health Check programme, the Pump It Up! blood pressure initiative, and Be Healthy Bucks. The report's finding that awareness of some risk factors, particularly ethnicity and family history, was lower will be used to inform future messaging.

Keep spreading the message that exercise is very good for everyone - adults, children, and even those with health problems. The benefits of being active are much greater than any risks. Let people know that anyone can do some sort of exercise, and not all types of exercise require spending money.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners strongly support this message. Increasing physical activity is a key part of our approach to prevention and of our Neighbourhood Health Programme. Partners will continue to promote the message that some activity is always better than none, and that being active does not need to cost money, for example through walking, active travel and exercising at home. Messaging will be inclusive of all ages, abilities and body sizes, recognising the report's finding that some people feel embarrassed or excluded from exercise. Health and care professionals will also be encouraged to talk with patients about physical activity as part of routine care, including people living with long-term conditions, where clinically appropriate.
Promote groups that help people with long-term health conditions or disabilities to get active, such as We are Undefeatable, Exercising from home | Disability charity Scope UK and England Athletics | Parkinson's UK.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners recognise that people with long-term conditions and disabilities benefit significantly from being active, and that many feel more confident doing so alongside others with similar experiences. Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust will encourage its clinical teams, including therapy, musculoskeletal, cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation and long-term condition services, to signpost patients to appropriate resources such as We Are Undefeatable, Scope's exercising from home guidance and condition-specific programmes such as those delivered by Parkinson's UK and England Athletics.
Promote free exercise options such as Simply Walk and how to find exercise and wellbeing activities, which match their interests, using the Joy App.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners will continue to promote free and low-cost activities, including Simply Walk health walks across the county. Joy continues to be promoted across services, enabling residents to find local physical activity and wellbeing activities by interest and location. Teams will continue to use Joy to connect residents with activities that suit their interests, abilities and circumstances.
Promote Be Healthy Bucks and BetterPoints Bucks further to help people lead healthier lives.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Be Healthy Bucks provides free support to help residents be more active, eat well, manage their weight, stop smoking and drink less, and BetterPoints Bucks rewards residents for walking, cycling and other healthy activities. Partners will continue to promote both through their communication channels, GP practices, voluntary sector partners and community events, with a particular focus on reaching residents in Opportunity Bucks wards. Our neighbourhood programme will involve proactively engaging with residents and encouraging them to take up preventative lifestyle services including those provided by Be Healthy Bucks.
Support groups that help women include exercise as part of their daily routine. This could be through activities like women's only cycling Let's Ride	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners recognise the barriers described by women in the report, including time, caring responsibilities, cost and, for some, the need for women-only spaces. Partners will continue to support initiatives such as

- Breeze Amersham or simple exercises at home like Move your way in 2026 – no rules, just you | This girl can. Investigate more women's only exercise options like women's only gym or swim sessions in Chesham.		This Girl Can and community-based activities such as women-only cycling rides. Partners will work with leisure providers and community organisations to explore the availability and promotion of women-only sessions, drawing on the feedback about women-only swimming and gym sessions in Chesham and access routes to women-only spaces. This will include considering how activities can be offered at times and in settings that fit around work and caring responsibilities.
Continue to promote Move Together Bucks Referral Pathway – Free Physical Activity Support for 50+ in Buckinghamshire - Active In The Community.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	Partners will continue to promote the Move Together Bucks referral pathway, which offers free physical activity support for people aged 50 and over. GPs, social prescribers, and other health and care professionals will be reminded of the pathway and how to refer, and information will continue to be shared through partner communications. The neighbourhood programme will proactively identify and engage residents eligible for Move Together Bucks, with the aim of increasing awareness of the service and supporting uptake.
Encourage local employers to help staff make physical activity a part of everyday life, because staying active is good for health and also benefits the employer. A new study published by the British Journal of Sports Medicine has found that taking five-minute breaks every hour is the best way to boost wellbeing while still being efficient at work.	Buckinghamshire Executive Partnership	As some of the largest employers in the county, partner organisations recognise the role they can play in supporting their own staff to be active. Partners will continue to promote staff wellbeing offers, including encouraging regular movement breaks, active travel and staff physical activity groups. Partners will also share the findings of this report, and the evidence on the benefits of workplace activity, with local employers, encouraging them to help staff build physical activity into the working day.

Buckinghamshire Council Responses:

Buckinghamshire Council takes a planned and coordinated approach to health communications. Our annual communications plan aligns with Public Health priorities as identified in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report and the Council's Corporate Plan. Throughout the year, we support a range of Public Health priorities, covering areas such as health protection, cardiovascular disease, mental health, healthy ageing, healthy lifestyles, drugs and alcohol, early years, healthy communities, sexual health and the wider determinants of health. Working with system partners, our focus is on providing residents with clear and relevant information about services, facilities and activities that can support their health and wellbeing, and how to access them. We work across Council services, Community Boards and local networks to reach different communities through the most appropriate channels. We coordinate activity where possible to reduce duplication and avoid overwhelming residents with similar messages. While our work is guided by planned priorities, we remain flexible and respond to emerging issues when needed. Our communications complement Public Health

engagement activity and are regularly evaluated to ensure resources are used effectively and deliver the greatest benefit for Buckinghamshire residents.

Healthwatch Recommendation	Organisation	Response
In line with the latest government active travel paper, to make walking and cycling easier and safer—so people can choose to walk or bike more often—expand Buckinghamshire's network of cycling paths.	Buckinghamshire Council	We have set out our active travel ambitions in the Buckinghamshire Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (adopted in 2025), the Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan 5 (adopted in September 2026), and are progressing the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire which is due for submission to Planning Inspectorate by end December 2026. Since the beginning of 2025 we have completed active travel schemes in Keep Hill Woods, High Wycombe and Misbourne Greenway, Great Missenden (in partnership with Sustrans). There are a number of schemes that are currently in development. These can be found online.
Continue to promote healthy eating through programmes such as the Healthy Start scheme and Healthier Families - Home – NHS.	Buckinghamshire Council	Buckinghamshire Council continues to promote healthy eating through a coordinated programme of targeted interventions, population level campaigns and commissioned services. To increase uptake of the NHS Healthy Start scheme, the Council delivers an annual awareness campaign and has developed training for frontline professionals to improve knowledge of the scheme and build confidence in having informed conversations with eligible residents. This aims to maximise access to financial support for healthy food and milk among low-income families. The Council also commissions Be Healthy Bucks, which provides evidence-based weight management services for children, young people and adults. These services support residents to adopt healthier eating habits, improve nutrition knowledge and achieve sustainable lifestyle changes as part of a broader approach to preventing obesity and improving health outcomes.
For use in schools: Look at models such as the ones used by The School Food Showdown and healthy meal competitions to help students better understand healthy eating, it's benefits and how to cook a meal from scratch.	Buckinghamshire Council	Buckinghamshire Council is supporting schools to develop children's knowledge, skills and confidence around healthy eating and food preparation through the commissioned PhunkyFoods programme. PhunkyFoods is a comprehensive, evidence informed early years and primary school programme that delivers healthy lifestyle education through curriculum linked activities, practical cooking and food preparation experiences, pupil leadership opportunities, parent engagement and whole school

		approaches to health and wellbeing. The programme covers healthy eating, physical activity and emotional wellbeing, using interactive and hands on learning to help children understand where food comes from, how to prepare healthy meals, and how everyday food choices can influence their health. The programme is delivered within targeted schools, including those in Opportunity Bucks areas and schools with higher levels of childhood obesity, ensuring support reaches communities where it can have the greatest impact. PhunkyFoods adopts a whole school approach, working not only with pupils but also with staff and families to embed healthy lifestyle messages throughout the school environment and create sustainable behaviour change. This work is complemented by participation in the national *Eat Them to Defeat Them* campaign, which uses positive, child focused marketing techniques to encourage children to try and enjoy a wider range of vegetables. Together, these initiatives provide engaging and practical opportunities for children to learn about nutrition, healthy eating and cooking from scratch, while reinforcing healthy behaviours both in school and at home. Beyond the school gates, the Healthy School Neighbourhoods programme, Good Food Retail programme and Good Food Takeaway programme help create local environments that support and reinforce these messages. By improving access to healthier food options in neighbourhood shops and takeaway outlets, and by providing tailored healthy lifestyle support to schools and communities, Buckinghamshire is taking a whole-systems approach to helping children and families make healthier food choices.
Refuse planning applications in line with the National Planning Policy Framework for local government for new fast-food outlets within walking distance of schools and in places where existing takeaways are already negatively impacting local	Buckinghamshire Council	Planning applications are taken against the Local Plan and material considerations. The emerging draft new Local Plan (as referred to above) contains policies which, once adopted, require: • **SE1 -** Submission of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for development proposals which meet certain criteria around size and use type. Submission of a HIA is required at the earliest

health. The Council's Fast Food report illustrated how fast food outlets in Bucks raise public health concerns particularly in deprived areas and near schools.		possible stage to identify positive health impacts and minimise negative health impacts, while maintaining a focus on addressing health inequalities. The conclusions of the HIA must be considered in the design of the scheme. The council recommend that applicants use the Buckinghamshire HIA toolkit and guidance once published. • **SE2 –** Relating to fast food outlets and takeaways, where planning permission is required takeaways outside of designated town centres will not be permitted if they are: a) Within a walking distance of schools, playgrounds and leisure centres; or b) in locations where there is evidence that a concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on local health, pollution or anti-social behaviour. For delivery-only models, proposals will be assessed according to this policy. Para 7.460 of the policy states: *"Walking distance is typically measured as 400 metres 'as the crow flies' from the main entrance of a school or place where children and young people congregate. This distance equates to approximately a 5–10-minute walk and the rationale is set out in the Health and Wellbeing evidence study. Planning decisions should consider any major physical barriers (e.g. motorways or rivers) that would prevent children being exposed to an outlet on walking routes to schools, playgrounds or leisure centres."*
Continue, where possible, to restrict outdoor advertising for food high in fat, salt and / or sugar on land they own.	Buckinghamshire Council	While Buckinghamshire Council has not adopted a policy to restrict advertising on land we own, we continue to support and promote healthy eating practices through the activities outlined above and will consider what further action could be taken in relation to promotions at future contract review points.