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To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 11 September 2025

Subject: Prevention in Growth, Environment and Transport

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: n/a

Future Pathway of report: n/a

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: This paper provides an overview of the role that Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) services play in the prevention of demand for social care, health and children's services. This paper will explain and demonstrate how these services support the Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH) Prevention Framework, the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy, KCC's strategic objective set out in Securing Kent's Future which prioritised 'New Models of Care and Support' and the NHS 10 Year Health Plan.

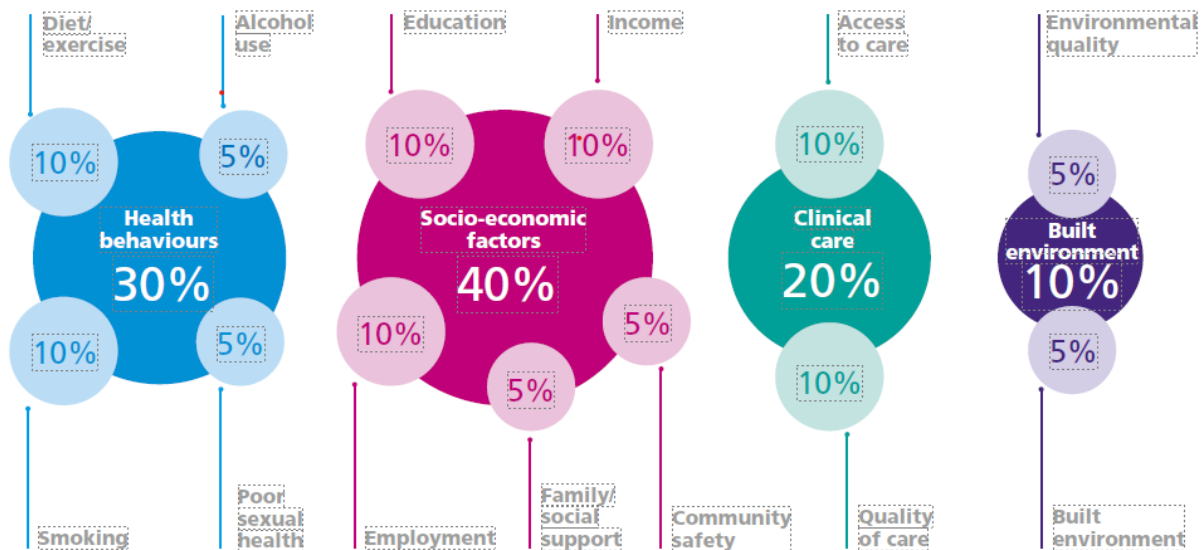
GET services allow our residents to live happier, healthier lives in resilient, connected communities that will, in the short, medium and long term, lead to a reduction in demand for costly Adult Social Care & Health, Children & Young People and NHS services.

Recommendation(s): The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 "Prevention is about helping people stay healthy, happy and independent for as long as possible. This means reducing the chances of problems from arising in the first place and, when they do, supporting people to manage them as effectively as possible." Department of Health and Social Care 2018.
- 1.2 Kent County Council has a statutory duty under The Care Act (2014) to prevent, reduce and delay the development of needs for care and support by promoting individual wellbeing and ensuring that people can live as independently as possible.

- 1.3 There are a wide range of things that determine someone's health and wellbeing. Clinical care determines 20 percent of someone's health and wellbeing. The remaining 80 percent of factors that affect health are called the wider determinants of health. The image below shows the factors that affect health and to what extent.



Based on: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, US County health rankings model 2014
www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/media/document/CHRR_2014_Key_Findings.pdf

- 1.4 GET services play a fundamental role in positively contributing to the 80 percent of factors that affect the health and wellbeing of the population of Kent. GET services that play a particular role include, but are not limited to;

- Highways and Transportation
- Strategic Planning & Infrastructure
- Community Safety
- Trading Standards
- Libraries, Registration & Archives
- Economy
- Culture & Creative Economy
- Gypsy and Romany Traveller Residents' Service
- Planning
- Public Rights of Way
- Country Parks and Countryside Partnerships
- Kent's Broadband Programme
- Waste Services and Kent Resource Partnership
- Natural Environment and Coast
- Active Kent and Medway

- 1.5 [Video about GET and Prevention](#) - this short (3min 30s) video shows how GET impacts the lives of all Kent residents and supports positive health outcomes and health creation.

- 1.6 Health Creation is the process through which individuals and communities gain a sense of purpose, hope and control over their own lives and immediate

environment. When this happens, their health and wellbeing are enhanced. The concept is built around 3Cs:

- Control: Having influence over one's life and environment.
- Contact: Building meaningful relationships and connections.
- Confidence: Developing self-belief and resilience.

2. Key Strategies and Policies

- 2.1 National and local policy is shifting towards a focus on health creation to reduce demand for health and social care services by prioritising prevention, early intervention, and community-based support. There are a number of local current strategies and future opportunities to strengthen resilience, improve wellbeing, and reduce long-term service dependency.
- 2.2 KCC's current Strategic Statement, [Framing Kent's Future](#), sets out four priorities for the Council over the period 2022-26. It requires all Directorates, at an operational level, to prioritise the 'New Models of Care and Support' objective as a collective. At the time of writing this report, the emerging Strategic Statement is not yet sighted.
- 2.3 KCC acknowledges that it is more effective and efficient to work as one organisation and with partners to prevent care needs occurring or increasing. To help achieve this, an [Adult Social Care Prevention Framework 2025-2035](#) has been drafted that sets out KCC's ambition to help more people in Kent live fulfilled, healthy and independent lives now and in the future. It sets out the 'Principle of prevention first'. GET services played an active role in contributing towards this Framework.
- 2.4 The [Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy](#) (ICS) sets out a vision to "work together to make health and wellbeing better than any partner can do alone." The ICS acknowledges that the wider determinants of health, for example education, housing, environment, transport, employment and community safety, have the greatest impact on our health. GET services again played an active role in contributing towards this Framework.
- 2.5 The [NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England](#) proposes a radical shift from sickness to prevention.
- 2.6 The [Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy 2025-30](#) has been developed collaboratively between the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP). It was presented to the last meeting (1st July) of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee, and subsequently adopted by the County Council. This joint initiative reflects a shared commitment to improving the health and productivity of our workforce, benefiting businesses and organisations and the local community.
- 2.7 The Government acknowledges through the [Cassey Commission](#) that Adult Social Care and Health in England is facing unprecedented challenges due to rising demand, increased costs of care and support and budget pressures. Adopting a prevention-first approach has emerged as a one of the sustainable

solutions, helping people live independently while easing the financial strain on local authorities, benefiting both residents and providers. The plethora of recent reports on prevention including the joint report published by the Local Government Association [Earlier action and support: The case for prevention in adult social care and beyond](#) underlines this fact.

- 2.8 The [Kent Marmot Coastal Region Programme](#) is a pioneering initiative led by KCC Public Health in partnership with the Institute of Health Equity at University College London. It aims to reduce entrenched health inequalities in Kent's coastal communities by addressing the social determinants of health through a whole-systems, place-based approach. The programme covers Swale, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, and Ashford. A range of GET services play a central role supporting the initial programme focus on work and health, and skills for work.
- 2.9 Demand for adult social care support in Kent is expected to increase by 9% in the next five years.¹ This increase in demand for health and care services is driven by demographic pressures, high rates of unemployment, increasing mental health needs and a growing number of safeguarding referrals.
- Mental health support needs in Kent will rise by 44% in 5 years.¹
 - Youth unemployment in Kent is 5.9% higher than the national rate.² Thanet has the highest youth unemployment rate in the South East at 11.4%.²
 - The number of older people aged 65+ in Kent is expected to rise by 28% in the next decade, with those over 85 increasing by 53% by 2035. If no action is taken, by 2035 the costs associated with meeting the needs of the over 65s alone will rise by at least 48%.³
 - According to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) cohort model developed by Whole Systems Partnership in collaboration with KCC Public Health, we expect in Kent an increase of 17.9% of people with dementia between 2022 and 2027.
 - Over 10 years to 2023, male life expectancy inequality in England increased to 10.5 years; for females it widened to 8.3 years.⁴ These life expectancy trends are reflected in Kent, especially in coastal and deprived areas.⁵
- 2.10 There is strong evidence for actions which could prevent or delay the development of dementia. The largest risk factors for the development of dementia are hearing loss, education, smoking, social isolation and depression. Modelling indicates dementia prevalence could be reduced by 40% by acting on these and other modifiable risk factors.

3. Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) Services

- 3.1 Through a wide range of place-based and regulatory services, GET plays an important role in supporting the wider determinants of health and reducing demand on overstretched health and social care services. GET services have proven economic and social benefits as illustrated by the wealth of studies around housing, leisure and cultural services, regulatory services and transport and highways.⁶ The studies all point to a need to invest in place services and to work as one Council, one organisation, together with partners, to support happy

and healthy lives and subsequently prevent, reduce and delay demand for health and social care services in the future.

3.2 Below are some examples that demonstrate the role that GET services play in Kent County Council's approach to prevention.

- 3.2.1 Economy function – a strong economy and access to good jobs are vital for good population health and wellbeing. Secure, fairly paid employment improves physical and mental wellbeing, reduces health inequalities, and lowers demand on health and social care services. Conversely, unemployment and poor-quality work contribute to poorer health outcomes, social exclusion, and increased public service costs. Promoting inclusive economic growth is therefore a key public health priority.

As of 2025, 27% of economic inactivity among Kent residents aged 16–64 is due to long-term health conditions, a rate higher than the South East average.⁷

- 3.2.2 Country Parks - parks and open spaces are vital public health assets. They promote physical activity, reduce stress, and improve mental wellbeing. Their accessibility supports health equity, particularly for disadvantaged communities. These spaces reduce demand for public health and social care services and play a key role in fostering community cohesion.

Several studies have calculated the benefits of parks and open spaces for the economy, the health of local communities and for the environment. One study, conducted by the Fields in Trust Charity, suggests that parks and green spaces have been estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year based solely on a reduction in GP visits.⁸

- 3.2.3 Explore Kent, Active Kent and Medway, Public Rights of Way, Highways and Transportation all enable and encourage people to be more active. To walk or cycle to school or work can deliver many benefits such as improved physical and mental health, more social connections and environmental benefits. The Department for Transport carried out research that found a “total benefit” of between £479 and £641 per year for each individual cycling more often, instead of driving.⁶

- 3.2.4 Library Service - libraries are vital community assets for public health. They provide safe, inclusive spaces that support learning, mental wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and promote digital and health literacy. Libraries offer trusted, non-clinical environments for early intervention, self-care, skills development and community engagement. A 2023 report titled ‘Libraries for living, and for living better’ estimates that library services in England can generate social benefits to their communities to a value of at least £3.4bn per year.⁹

- 3.2.5 Trading Standards (TS) – this service plays a vital role in protecting public health by ensuring consumer products are safe, food is correctly

labelled, and age-restricted goods are not sold to children. TS also disrupts illicit trade, supports legitimate businesses, and helps reduce pressure on health and social care services.

In 2024, a major enforcement operation across Maidstone, Sittingbourne and Dover led to the seizure of over 150,000 illegal cigarettes, 75kg of hand-rolling tobacco, nicotine pouches and hundreds of illicit vapes, significantly reducing health risks and criminal activity.

The now national 'Local Vape Action' partnership was initially trialled in Tunbridge Wells and has since been started in Ashford. This project brings together retailers, local authorities and the Police to prevent sales of illicit goods and sales to children. The initiative focuses on preventing underage sales through education, enforcement, and engagement, with early results showing reduced illegal sales and strong public support.

In addition, TS provides business advice and promotes fair trading, contributing to healthier environments, consumer protection, and economic resilience.

- 3.2.6 Trading Standards Checked – doorstep crime is a serious issue in Kent, particularly affecting older, socially excluded and lonely adults. In 2024, victims in Kent lost an average of £15,700 each.¹⁰ Most victims are aged 65 and over, with 18% aged 80+, and many live alone or have physical or cognitive impairments.

The impact is severe: when defrauded in this way, victims are 2½ times more likely to die or go into residential care than their non-defrauded peers within two years.¹¹ Many suffer long-term psychological harm, including depression, anxiety, and loss of confidence. The broader UK cost of doorstep crime is estimated at £1.3 billion annually, excluding health and social care costs.¹¹

Kent County Council's [Trading Standards Checked scheme](#) helps reduce doorstep crime. Whilst it is not known how many victims of this crime would require KCC funded care it must be recognised that they will have been defrauded of some or all of their assets and therefore are more likely to qualify for KCC funded care.

- 3.2.7 Broadband - universal access to broadband is essential for improving public health outcomes in Kent. It enables digital inclusion, supports remote healthcare, reduces isolation, and improves access to education, employment, and public services. According to Ofcom's Connected Nations Data¹², as of January 2025, 76.4% of homes and businesses across Kent can access a gigabit-capable connection. Our ongoing work with the telecoms providers is crucial to improve connectivity in both urban and rural areas for equitable access to telehealth, digital care and supporting the wider determinants of health.

3.2.8 Strategic Planning and Infrastructure – this function is essential in ensuring well-designed community infrastructure, such as community hubs, transport networks, health centres, green space etc, which promotes good health, enables prevention and improves access to care and services. As a strategic function, it plays a key role in aligning investment, housing, transport, and economic development to address the wider determinants of health. A new 'Principal Planning for Health Officer', jointly funded by KCC Public Health, Strategic Planning and Active Kent and Medway, will ensure places and spaces in Kent are well designed, sustainable and positively impact on the health and wellbeing of communities.

3.2.9 Many services in GET contribute to tackling loneliness and social isolation, which have profound impacts on health and are increasingly recognised as public health priorities in the UK. These issues significantly increase risks of depression, physical illness, and health inequalities - especially among older adults and vulnerable groups. Addressing them through community engagement, social prescribing, place-based services and targeted support improves wellbeing and reduces pressure on health and social care systems.

Libraries, Community Wardens, Active Kent and Medway, Creative and Cultural Economy, Broadband, Positive Wellbeing, Country Parks and Countryside Partnerships, Public Rights of Way, Highways and Transportation are just some of the services that promote and enable social connectedness in the heart of Kent communities.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Evidence, research and strategic policy at a national level all point towards prevention as the best and most effective way to tackle rising demand and rising public sector costs.

Kent County Council's Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) services are central to delivering effective prevention and promoting public health across the county. By addressing the wider determinants of health such as employment, environment, infrastructure, safety, and social connectedness, GET services reduce demand on overstretched health and social care systems and improve long-term outcomes for residents.

The evidence presented demonstrates that investing in place-based and regulatory services not only enhances wellbeing but also contributes to economic resilience and service sustainability. As demand continues to rise and resources remain constrained, a whole-system, preventative approach rooted in collaboration, data-driven planning, and community engagement is essential.

GET will continue to work across the Council and with partners to embed prevention in all policies and services, ensuring Kent's communities are supported to live healthier, happier, and more independent lives.

5. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

6. Contact details

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7. References

- 1 Adult Social Care Prevention Framework 2025 - 2035 (Draft) - Kent Analytics modelling work, June 2025.
- 2 [Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard](#) – KCC Kent Analytics, May 25.
- 3 [Adult Social Care Prevention Framework 2025 - 2035 \(Draft\)](#) – KCC Adult Social Care and Health, June 2025.
- 4 [Health Inequalities Dashboard: statistical commentary](#) - GOV.UK, May 2025.
- 5 [Cabinet Committee Report - Health Inequalities – An overview on the differences in the wider determinants of health and health outcomes across Kent](#) - Dr Ellen Schwartz Deputy Director of Public Health, Tami Sonubi Senior Public Health Intelligence Analyst Pam McConnell Business Support Officer, January 2024.
- 6 [Demonstrating the beneficial impact of local government spending](#) – a report by Shared Intelligence, Nov 2019.
- 7 [Health and Wellbeing Board Report - Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy](#) - Aeilish Geldenhuys, Strategic Head of Service, Public Health Daniel Ratcliff, Head of Skills, Employment and Adult Education Jacqui Moore, ICS Prevention Lead, June 2025.
- 8 [Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces](#) - Fields in Trust Wellbeing Valuation research, 2018.
- 9 [Libraries for Living, and for Living Better](#) – University of East Anglia Creative, UEA and Health Economics Consulting, June 2023.

- 10 [Cabinet Committee Report - Trading Standards Checked](#) - Rebecca Law, Business Innovation Manager, March 25.
- 11 [Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers \(ACTSO\) - Summary of Doorstep Crime Report to National Tasking Group](#) (downloads a document) – Ruth Andrews, May 2014.
- 12 [Broadband Coverage and Speed Test Statistics for Kent](#), thinkbroadband.com, January 2025.