



## Cabinet

**13 January 2026**

### **“The Power of Sleep - a Wake-up Call” Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2024-2025**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Teresa Murray, Deputy Leader of the Council

Report from: David Whiting, Director of Public Health

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#### **Summary**

Directors of Public Health (DsPH) have a statutory requirement to produce an annual public health report (APHR). These reports are the DsPH's professional statement about the health of the local community.

The 2025 report explores the role that sleep plays in health and wellbeing and the impact that it has on a range of factors that influence the health, both direct impacts such as making it harder to engage in healthy behaviours, to indirect impacts through employment and productivity.

It provides initial findings of work to understand sleep in Medway and potential impact in health inequalities. It also outlines some ways to improve sleep and reduce the adverse effects of poor sleep and sets out how simple measures can be added to existing public health interventions to address the problem.

The report was considered at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 20 November 2025 and by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2025 the draft minutes of which are set out at sections 8 and 9 of the report below.

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the comments made by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 25 November 2025 and by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2025 the draft minutes of which are set out at sections 8 and 9 of the report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to note the Annual Public Health Report 2024-2025.

## 2. Suggested Reasons for Decision

2.1. Directors of Public Health have a duty to publish an annual report on a topic relating to the health of the population in their area.

## 3. Budget and policy framework

3.1. Tackling inequalities and improving health and wellbeing services for all, is an identified priority within the forthcoming 'One Medway' Council Plan 2024-2028. Additionally, the refreshed Medway Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-2028 has 4 key themes:

- Healthier and Longer Lives for Everyone;
- Reduce Poverty and Inequality;
- Connected Communities and Cohesive Services;
- Safe Connected and Sustainable Places.

3.2. Directors of Public Health have a duty to write an Annual Public Health Report under the Health and Social Care Act, 2012. The aim of an Annual Public Health Report is to identify issues that are currently impacting, or have the potential to, on the health or wellbeing of the local authority's population. Directors of Public Health are tasked with making recommendations to address identified issues.

## 4. Background

4.1. In 2023, to inform the development of the Medway Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Medway Council carried out the 'Better Health Survey' to understand which aspects of life residents thought were most important to their health and wellbeing. Sleeping well was cited as a key priority for both adults and adolescents and featured in the top five for both groups.

4.2. Subsequently, the topic of poor sleep or being tired was raised in a number of settings and the potential impact it has on health and wellbeing became more apparent. Initial exploration of data on sleep relating to Medway indicated that this would be a topic of interest with the potential to develop a range of simple interventions to improve the quality of sleep and therefore improve health and productivity in Medway.

## 5. Advice and analysis

5.1. The Annual Public Health Report sets out a number of recommendations that will form the basis of a programme of work to:

- 5.1.1. Better understand the role of sleep in health and wellbeing at a population level in Medway;
- 5.1.2. Build action on sleep into existing programmes;

5.1.3. Develop a campaign to inform residents about how they can improve the way that they sleep.

## 6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Report not published and duty of DPH not fulfilled	The Director of Public Health fails to produce an annual report on the health of the population of Medway for 2025	A project plan has been developed and it being followed on schedule	CIV

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

## 7. Consultation

7.1. In common with previous Annual Public Health Reports, evidence is gained from a number of different sources. Once finalised, the report and its recommendations will be shared with a range of organisations and committees. The report will also be presented to a range of council committees. These include the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

## 8. Health and Wellbeing Board

- 8.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board considered the report at its meeting on 20 November 2025 and the draft minutes of that discussion are set out as follows:
- 8.2. The Director of Public Health introduced the annual report and stressed how easy it was to underestimate the impact of sleep on health and wellbeing. The overall impact cost the country's economy approximately £40 billion in lost productivity. During the production of this report, a survey was conducted by Healthwatch Medway, details of their findings which can be found at [How Medway Sleeps | Healthwatch Medway](#).

8.3. Members raised a number of questions and comments which included:

- 8.3.1. There were many factors that contributed to poor sleep and the impact this had on health and wellbeing was not well recognised and simple remedies undervalued. Poor attitudes and understanding contributed to diminishing of its importance on productivity.
- 8.3.2. Whilst Public Health had a role to play in providing information on how people could improve their sleep quality, and the Council had a role to play through initiatives such as preserving dark skies in urban areas, and addressing issues with poor housing and rough sleeping, there was also a fundamental personal responsibility by individuals to address barriers to improving their quality of sleep. The Board was informed that there were many valuable steps that could be taken to address issues, and the findings of this report would be the basis of further work to be undertaken. Many interventions would cost little money, for example by promoting behaviour change.
- 8.3.3. Consideration was needed on understanding the impact on young people and adolescents, who due to hormonal changes, required more sleep and could be perceived by society as just being lazy when that was not necessarily the case.
- 8.3.4. Addressing screen time both for young and older generations, but in particular adolescents, was also a factor, which not only affected sleep but also impacted mental health and social interaction.
- 8.3.5. In response a question about next steps following this report, the Board was informed that as well as building sleep into existing work, such as smoking cessation, a campaign would be developed on this topic to help people to better understand sleep and the measures they could take to improve how they sleep.

8.4. **Decision:**

- 8.4.1. The Committee noted the report.

9. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 9.1. The Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report at its meeting on 4 December 2025 and the draft minutes of that discussion are set out as follows:
- 9.2. Directors of Public Health are required to produce an annual report each year. The topic for this year's report was inspired by part of the work undertaken in development of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy where the impact of sleep was reported as a key factor by both adults and adolescents. There were core links between sleep and other Public Health work, affecting behaviour that influences how well people were able to prevent or address issues such as obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and manage their mental health. The overall cost of poor sleep to the country's economy was

approximately £40 billion, and Medway is likely in the region of £200 million in lost productivity. Addressing issues of poor sleep was not just limited to individual responsibility and was more about the interaction between choice and wider factors of life.

9.3. Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

- 9.3.1. **Acknowledging the importance of sleep** – the acknowledgement of the importance of sleep for all and the impact to individuals lives and society being recognised was encouraging. Children and young adults often had issues with sleep, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Poor sleep affected mental health, as well as concentration and productivity in educational settings. Poor sleep in working adults often impacted concentration at work which was essential; in all professions.
- 9.3.2. **Accessibility of sleep clinics** – it was asked how accessible it was for people in the community to access sleep clinics. The Committee was informed that access to clinical interventions must be explored in broader terms. Medway had a large population of night time economy employees and the Public Health team had work based health programmes available to assist employers to build in tools and strategies to support their staff with managing poor sleep. Data on sleep apnoea and access to service was requested by the Committee.

9.4. **Decision:**

9.4.1. The Committee noted the Annual Public Health Report 2025.

10. Climate change implications

- 10.1. Climate change is leading to more extreme weather. Housing in the UK is not well-designed for extremely hot weather and extremely hot nights lead to poorer quality sleep, especially for those who are unable to afford air conditioning. This may lead to an increase in health inequalities.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1. Any resources required to deliver ambitions set out in this report will need to be met from existing service or organisational budgets.

12. Legal implications

- 12.1. The Annual Public Health Report is an independent report of the Director of Public Health as set out in Section 73B(5) & (6) of the NHS Act 2006, inserted by section 31 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Local Authorities are required to publish the Director of Public Health's Annual Public Health Report.

## Lead officer contact

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Annual Public Health Report: The Power of sleep - A wake-up Call

## Background papers

None