



## News Release

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### **LOCAL VARIATION IN AVOIDABLE DEATH RATES PUBLISHED**

**Figures for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes differ in causes of early death**

A new website showing significant variation in early death rates has been launched today to drive public awareness and local action to tackle public health problems.

*Longer Lives*, a new Public Health England (PHE) website, allows people to see easily local information for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes, on early deaths from major killers, like heart disease, stroke and cancer and how it varies across the area and the country.

Using a traffic-light rating system, it ranks areas showing those above average in tackling avoidable deaths as green, while those that still have more to do, are red.

The website contains a range of data that for the first time allows people to easily compare an area's mortality against those with similar populations, incomes and levels of health. Overall it shows that the north of England has a higher risk of early death than the south, but when comparing areas of a similar socioeconomic status, it reveals a more complex picture.

Across the area the picture is mixed, with early death rates varying across the six top-tier local authorities. For example:

- Central Bedfordshire Council is third in the country for low death rates from liver disease but has the highest death rate from lung disease within its category of similar local authorities (classed as having a least deprived population)

- Luton Borough Council has a high rate of heart disease deaths in the country (118<sup>th</sup> out of 149) but has the second lowest rate for liver disease deaths compared to similar local authorities
- Premature death rates are better than the average rate of the country for Hertfordshire County Council but the council area is worse than average amongst similar local authorities for lung disease deaths
- Milton Keynes Council has the highest death rates for heart disease, stroke and lung disease amongst similar local authorities but is better than average in the country for premature deaths overall and has low rates of liver disease related deaths.

The data and website will provide local areas with information to help them understand their own position and better target efforts to improve the health of the people they serve.

Mike Lilley, Health Protection Lead, Public Health England, South Midlands & Hertfordshire said: “Longer Lives will support local government in its new role as the champion for their public’s health. It presents a clear picture of health in local areas – where it is good and where there is more to do, so everyone involved can consider and agree how to make improvements from a common basis of the same information.

“The website goes further than just data, and contains evidence of what needs to be done and case studies of what has been successful elsewhere. Longer Lives has the potential to make a real difference to the health of each and every community in our area and we’ll be working hard with local authorities and the NHS to bring about the changes we need.”

The evidence is clear - a person’s likelihood of dying prematurely from one of the top four killers varies widely between local authorities due to differences in risk factors, such as obesity, alcohol and smoking and that these are closely linked to economic deprivation.

Local councils were given the leadership of public health in April 2013 as part of a move to empower local areas to make real change in people’s lives. To help them deliver these improvements the government has given them £5.46bn of funding over a two-year period.

Leading the work of the local Health and Wellbeing Board with Clinical Commissioning Group partners, local councils have a pivotal role in piloting the local health and care system to improve the health of their local citizens.

The website provides examples of best practice from other local authorities, guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and links to NHS Choices so that

individuals, families and citizens can learn about these conditions and what they can do to improve their health.

This data is the first information to be rolled out as part of the Government's plans to provide the public and health professionals in local areas with clear, easy accessible information on how health and care services are doing in improving health outcomes wherever we live.

### **Notes to Editors**

- To access the site, please visit: **longerlives.phe.org.uk**
- The data provided in *Longer Lives* is from the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF). This is the first time it has been published in this form, making the information easy to access, view and compare. It is also the first time it has been published alongside relevant supporting information, such as the intervention guidance provided by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).
- From May 2013 *Longer Lives* will undergo a process of continuous iteration adding new data and responding to feedback from health professionals and users.
- Longer Lives provides peer grouping so local authorities can compare their premature mortality rates with others of similar socioeconomic status. All local authorities are divided into ten groups (each containing fifteen local authorities) by their Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- For more information please contact the Department of Health on 0207 210 4990 or Public Health England on 0207 654 8400.

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