Primary Prevention in the Context of Neighbourhood Health *(Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 3 September 2026)*
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Primary prevention is now a central pillar of Worcestershire's Neighbourhood Health programme, aiming to shift care into communities, reduce avoidable illness, and strengthen local capacity. As the report states, *"clinical care accounts for less than 20% of health outcomes… over 80% is determined by wider social factors"*. Worcestershire's approach focuses on three integrated domains: **Insight & Intelligence**, **Health Improvement Services**, and **Community Engagement & Development**.

Insight & Intelligence
Public Health has developed neighbourhood-level analysis across 350 LSOAs, identifying variation in non-elective admissions and profiling 14 priority neighbourhoods. These profiles cover demographics, deprivation, housing, retail environments and service access, enabling Primary Care Networks to target interventions more effectively. *"Neighbourhood profiles have been developed for fourteen priority neighbourhood areas… shared with Primary Care Networks"*.

Health Improvement Services
Worcestershire delivers a wide range of prevention services including smoking cessation, weight management, falls prevention, substance misuse support, sexual health, and children's public health programmes. The **Healthy Worcestershire** programme integrates physical activity, strength and balance, weight management, smoking cessation and social connection in community venues.
A new **online referral portal** streamlines access for professionals, and services are promoted through social media, community outreach and local media partnerships. Investment includes £131,390 per year to expand online STI testing and the launch of **Quit Coach**, an AI-supported WhatsApp cessation tool. Trading Standards contributes through enforcement against illicit tobacco and non-compliant vaping products.
Rural access is supported through Family Hubs outreach and 35 Healthy Worcestershire venues, including village halls such as Blackwell and Burford.

Community Engagement & Development
Worcestershire's asset-based approach empowers communities to shape health improvement. Over **1,000 grants** worth **£3 million** have been awarded since 2023. The programme is based on the WHO Ottawa Charter and has won the **2025 LGC Public Health Award**, with national and international recognition. Youth work engages over 1,000 young people monthly, supporting wellbeing and reducing risk-taking behaviours.
Outcomes
Recent performance shows significant improvements:

- Smoking in pregnancy reduced from **8.3% to 3.3%**, halving the number of women smoking during pregnancy.
- Adult smoking prevalence fell to **7.5%**, a 33% reduction in two years.
- Overweight/obesity rates dropped from **68% to 63%**, now below regional and national averages.
- Falls among older people reduced from **1660 to 1607 per 100,000**, outperforming national trends.
- Healthy Worcestershire engaged **1,000+ residents**, with 75% improving activity and strength.
- Worcestershire now has the **highest healthy life expectancy in the West Midlands** (63.6 years men; 63.1 years women).

Challenges
Key challenges remain:

- Rising proportion of children in low-income households (from **16.6% to 18%**).
- Child development outcomes slightly below national average.
- Child obesity strongly linked to deprivation; behavioural interventions alone are ineffective.
- STI testing rates remain too low; expanded online testing aims to address this.

A multi-agency strategy is underway, including expanded Family Hubs and system-wide action on healthy food environments.

Conclusion
Primary prevention is delivering measurable improvements across smoking, obesity, falls, mortality and healthy life expectancy. Worcestershire's model is influencing national policy and international practice. Continued investment and system-wide collaboration will be essential to maintain progress and address persistent inequalities.