



Annual Director of Public Health Report 2022-23

Working towards a healthier Southampton

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Foreword	4
Dr Debbie Chase, Director of Public Health	4
Cllr Lorna Fielker, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Adults and Leisure	5
Cllr Alex Houghton, Shadow Cabinet Member for Health	6
Cllr Sarah Bogle, Cabinet Member for Economic Development	6
Summary	7
Index of figures	11
1. Work and health	12
Employment is a key building block of good health and wellbeing	12
Good work	13
The Southampton economy and workforce	15
Geographical and historical factors	16
Southampton innovation in business, growth and health	17
Business, skills and employment support	17
Business summits and networks	18
Draft Southampton City Vision Local Plan	19
Anchor institutions	19
2. Opportunities to improve health through work in the city	21
Recent workforce health challenges and opportunities	22
Good Work Principles in Southampton	24
Access to employment	25
Pay and income	27
Skills and learning	28
Health of the Southampton workforce	30
Multiple chronic conditions	30
Sickness absence, stress and autonomy	32
The future	34

3. Opportunities for employers to benefit health and business	27
The role of Anchor Institutions	27
The Good Work Charter	27
Access	28
Fair pay	28
Fair conditions	28
Equality, dignity and autonomy	28
Wellbeing	28
Support	29
Participation	29
Learning	29
Workforce needs	29
Information, advice and guidance	29
4. Recommendations	30
Appendix I: Progress on past recommendations	32
Appendix II: Data on Southampton Good Work Principles	35
Appendix III: Advice and guidance for employers	41

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks go to Kate Harvey, Consultant in Public Health, Mirembe Woodrow, Senior Public Health Practitioner, Vicky Toomey, Senior Strategic Intelligence Analyst, Kate Anderson, Strategic Data Analyst, Steven Lewis, Strategic Intelligence Analyst, Amy Devine, Principal Data Analyst, and Jessica Brimble, Senior Communications Officer without whom this report would not have been possible. Special thanks to Gregory White at Drop the Mask Productions CIC, Nicole Dawson at Carnival UK, Debbie Reed and Cathy Doust at Red Funnel, Sara Warry-Powell at Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, and the team at Southampton Individual Placement and Support Service who have provided case studies for this report.



Foreword

Debbie Chase, Director of Public Health

Coming out of the pandemic, our focus has been on the increased health and social inequalities in the city. This will remain the case, and the continuing pressure on residents from the cost of essentials such as food and fuel has meant there is further need for immediate and focused action for the most vulnerable in our population.

Last year's report emphasised the need to work on wider actions to support the building blocks of good health (see Appendix I for progress on last year's recommendations). One of the key areas for action was to promote and encourage good work and fair employment for our city's working age population. This year's report looks at the importance of good work for health, the progress we are making towards improving access to work and working conditions, and the opportunities and practical actions employers can take to support their staff's physical and mental health and wellbeing whilst future-proofing their businesses and increasing growth.

There is significant effort ongoing across the city to invest and drive economic development, and I have met business partners this year in local summits and events that have included an emphasis on the importance of workplace health and wellbeing. As well as a key driver of population health, good work and fair employment are a crucial part of covid recovery and the subsequent shift in our ways of working.

Businesses and other employers are a huge part of the fabric of our city. There is clear appetite from employers in Southampton, particularly since the pandemic, to invest in staff wellbeing. But we must go further and grasp every opportunity to promote a healthy culture in business and in the workplace, because this benefits everyone. Previously the workplace focus tended to be on ill-health prevention through workplace wellbeing award schemes for example. These have their place and are not the limit of our potential to benefit health and wellbeing through work. Good work that is accessible, fair and secure means so much more than this and can be very powerful for enabling life chances. This is why the creation of decent work and economic growth is one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

For good health and wellbeing in our city, access to employment needs to be equitable. Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to society and reach their potential, and talent should be sought out from all parts of our society and potential should not be going to waste. This makes sense for employers too; a richly diverse workforce can be a huge asset. We need to enable access to employment across all population groups by supporting and empowering vulnerable and previously excluded groups into work. Fair earnings and working conditions drive living standards, which impact health. If earnings are inequitable, or working conditions poor, so will be workers' health. And if general health is poor in the workforce, a business will not thrive.

Across the UK there has been a recent rise in economic inactivity, which is not good news for our economy and raises the question of what is causing this. Although we have not yet seen inactivity rise in Southampton, the proportion of people who are inactive due to long-term illness

has increased recently. We also know that people in our city are being diagnosed with multiple chronic conditions earlier in their lives than previously, and nationally the number of people with major illnesses is predicted to rise substantially by 2040. If increasing poor health is a factor in Southampton's economically inactive populations, our focus on helping people to remain in work, supporting people to get back into work, and enabling barriers to work to be overcome is all the more important.

Our strategic approach to growth is strengthened when built on the understanding that our city is a collection of subsystems - economic, social, community, health - which all affect each other and which are only as strong as the weakest subsystem. Health now matters more than ever if we want to achieve our vision of being a city where everyone thrives. The positive effect of adopting good workplace policies and practices can be felt across all our subsystems and will be crucial in delivering a healthy and prosperous Southampton for generations to come.

Cllr Lorna Fielker, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Adults and Leisure

Southampton is an incredible city with a rich, industrial past and fantastic assets that will secure its exciting future ahead. Our city's residents are its key strength and the enabler of our prosperity. Their health individually and collectively is so crucial to the city's future: we know that a healthy city has a strong local economy.

As organisations and employers, we have a responsibility to our local communities and residents. A key part of this is making sure our staff's health and wellbeing are properly supported, and not only by encouraging healthier behaviour but by the workplace policies we offer. We spend an enormous amount of time at work, and if that work is of poor quality, or badly paid, or insecure, this can have a huge impact on our health. Our businesses and our city can't afford for our working age population to have worsening health.

It is time we took a strategic approach to support good work and workplace health in our city, and I am fully behind the recommendations made in this report. The need for good work is important now more than ever. But as part of this approach, we must also ensure that the city's growth benefits the people who live in Southampton. Southampton ranks within the top 10% of cities for good growth, but we currently fare less well on measures of good work. It's important that the two aims align. Too often community wealth building is seen as a 'nice to have' but if we are serious about maximising growth in the city our focus must be on improvements that first and foremost benefit the local population and our businesses.

As leaders we are obliged to model good work policies and behaviours in our organisations, share best practice and invest in our workforce health for the future. I commend this report to all employers in the city and challenge us all to do more to embed the fundamentals of good work in our workplace culture.

Cllr Alex Houghton, Shadow Cabinet Member for Health

Employers have a hugely important role in improving the health of our city's residents, and I welcome this report as both a benchmark of Southampton's progress on wellbeing and good work, and a challenge to us as employers and policymakers to aspire to do even more. As a city with enormous potential, we need to do all we can to ensure the building blocks of good health and a prosperous economy are in place. Delivering on good work underpins both these components and should be a focus of our strategies going forward.

Cllr Sarah Bogle, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

I welcome the focus of this report on good work – health is definitely wealth and we need to ensure our residents and businesses are reaching a lot more of their potential. Our economic development is fundamentally about our people and how they progress and thrive in the world of work. I hope that Southampton can at least reach Southeast average wage levels, and achieve a reduction in inequality. As the city grows, my aim is to achieve not growth for its own sake, but sustainable and equitable growth, where more of the wealth created in the city is felt by local people. The concept labelled 'Southampton Pound', our version of community wealth building, seeks to address this through our own policies and practices as well as influencing employers and especially 'anchor institutions' to rise that to that challenge.



Summary

In Southampton there are significant differences between people's health: almost 8 years' difference in male life expectancy (3.4 years for females) between the most and least deprived areas of the city. This means lives are being cut short. Almost every part of our lives affects our health and our life expectancy in one way or another e.g. our housing, education and the type of job that we do. Employment is a key building block of good health and wellbeing. Workplaces are therefore an important setting, and employers can have a strong influence on the conditions that influence people's health.

Being in work can be good for health. Employment provides people with income which can support standards of living and can engender a sense of stability and security. It also enables people to have social connections, a sense of worth and of contributing to society and a feeling of fulfilment. All these elements have an influence on physical and mental health but it is important that work is of good quality and employment is fair. Feeling insecure about employment and income can be hugely stressful, which takes its toll on health. Doing work that is hazardous and unsafe without appropriate safeguards poses risks to physical and mental health. Similarly, working in a job of poor quality, for example with no opportunity for progression or autonomy, can be challenging and bad for health. Working in secure roles that pay and treat people fairly and with dignity can enable people to thrive. It can also reduce the pressure on local support services. The Good Work Charter¹ from the Institute for the Future of Work provides a comprehensive framework about what makes a good quality job by setting out ten principles of 'good work'.

Investing in workplace health can also bring important benefits to economic growth and businesses. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce, and an unhealthy workforce is problematic for business. The cost of ill health to the UK economy is estimated to be around £100 billion, and approximately 1 in 4 UK employees report having a physical health condition. We know that the burden of ill health in the UK is predicted to get significantly larger, a situation that demands urgent review and action across all of the wider determinants of health, employment included.

In Southampton there are a number of opportunities and challenges for the economy, workforce and population health. PWC Good Growth 2023 ranks Southampton within the top 10% of cities for good growth. On measures of good work, however, The Good Work Monitor from the Institute for the Future of Work ranks Southampton 88th out of 117 local authorities in England, which is lower than the city's nearest neighbours. Unemployment in Southampton is declining, but there is still inequality in access to employment, and a significantly higher rate of 16-17yr olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to the England average.

¹ [The Good Work Charter - IFOW](#)

Southampton has a long and rich history as a port city with strong industry and manufacturing. Over hundreds of years its maritime location has brought significant trade and settlement, and has driven the prosperity and health of the city's businesses and residents. Some of Southampton's health opportunities and challenges can partially be attributed to its geography and modern-day industrial history. Until the late 20th century, manufacturing was a central part of the city's economy, and this may have a legacy today in the health of some of the city's retired residents. Since the decline of manufacturing there has been a shift towards more service industry including health, education, retail, business administration support and professional and scientific services. These types of work bring different health opportunities and challenges to the city's working population. Looking to the future, employment is likely to adapt and evolve into growth sectors such as digital and net zero industries, but the city's growth and productivity could be at risk if workplace health is not prioritised.

Significant investment has been made in driving economic development, business skills, employment support and access to good work in Southampton, with local summits, key partnerships and services providing direction and delivery, including an emphasis on community wealth building. Support teams across the city are engaged and working hard to increase access to work, and promoting good work and health and wellbeing. With a strong raft of measures, including programmes and resources in skills development, apprenticeships, adult education and community learning, Southampton is well equipped to help support people into work, stay in work and progress in their careers. The city's anchor institutions are playing their part too, and attention on the beneficial impact of organisations in our health and care system on population health is growing, including through a focus in the new Health and Care Partnership.

The opportunities to improve health through Southampton's working age population are significant, with many key health outcomes remaining below national and regional benchmarks and some stark inequalities requiring action. By the age of 40-44yrs, over half of Southampton residents have at least one long-term condition, and analysis shows that diagnosis of multiple chronic conditions is happening earlier than it was in 2017. There is also a strong relationship in the city between being economically active and better health. Furthermore, across England sickness absence has risen to its highest rate since 2004, and the number of people with major illness is predicted to rise substantially by 2040. The legacy of Covid-19 and significant rises in inflation since 2021 are also having a considerable impact on our city's most vulnerable.

This report sets out the opportunities that are available in the city for employers to benefit both health and their business. The contribution of good work to the health of the Southampton population is extremely important, and each component of good work also offers a huge opportunity for employers and for society more widely.

We include several case studies in this report to provide examples of how local organisations are approaching wellbeing in work. The Good Work Charter also offers businesses many ways in which they can benchmark their employment and skills model, and provides a comprehensive and supportive toolkit to implement the ten key elements of good work:

- Access to employment
- Fair pay
- Fair conditions
- Equality
- Dignity
- Autonomy
- Wellbeing
- Support
- Participation
- Learning

The Anchor Institution model with its five key pillars is a further source of opportunity and inspiration:

- 1.** Widen access to good work
- 2.** Work closely with partners across a place
- 3.** Purchase locally and for social benefit
- 4.** Use buildings and spaces to support communities
- 5.** Reduce environmental impact

In this report's recommendations, Dr Debbie Chase, Director of Public Health for Southampton calls on employers and business leaders to review and reshape their approach to workplace health and wellbeing, and to act now by investing for health and for the city's economic future. The sooner action is taken, the sooner the city's vision of being a place where everyone can thrive will be achieved. Dr Chase makes eight recommendations for employers to:

- 1.** Actively maximise their impact across the five key areas of influence as anchor institutions in our city
- 2.** Understand the health and social needs of their workforce and their business
- 3.** Adopt the principles of The Good Work Charter
- 4.** Instil leadership that brings about a change in culture whereby the way work is organised promotes good physical and mental health
- 5.** Level the playing field by paying special attention to the needs of those disproportionately impacted by unemployment or who find it difficult to remain in work
- 6.** Take steps to address in-work poverty
- 7.** Work locally in city-wide partnerships towards skills planning and strategic leadership

8. Monitor and record the impact of their action

Dr Chase also recommends that business and skills planners:

9. Be ready to implement actions arising from the developing Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Case Study: Drop the Mask Productions CIC

Drop the Mask Productions Community Interest Company (CIC) is a Southampton information technology and media company. Its ethos, and that of its staff, is about using technology and media to address social justice and equality and create positive change in society. One of the company's key principles is that everyone should be able to 'drop the mask' and access safe, inclusive employment opportunities and feel empowered to reach their potential. Difference is celebrated and valued. Through their recruitment strategies and through influencing other organisations, the company aims to remove barriers to work for those with physical or mental health difficulties or neurodiversity, and support people to remain in work.

With a small staff, the company's Director and Founder Gregory White explains what this means in practice:

"Using our links with local case workers, Individual Placement Support (IPS) agencies, the Southampton Job Hub or through the Kickstart Scheme, we look to work with people who are unemployed, under-employed or who have never been employed, and through a casual discussion find out about their skills, abilities and capacity and create a space for them. We are committed to fair pay, and provide people with training and development, mental health support and generally aim to reduce exposure to stress. We have as flat a hierarchy as possible and ensure everyone can participate in shared decision-making so we don't miss vital issues."

"People sometimes feel they have to hide their physical or mental health difficulties or neurodiversity in order to secure an employment opportunity, but this can sometimes lead to problems in the workplace later on. If companies know their staff well they can put measures in place to help staff thrive and prevent those problems occurring, enabling people to remain in work and also providing the business with the opportunity to benefit from having a diverse workforce. Diversity has really helped with the creativity of Drop The Mask Productions CIC. When people feel secure in their employment and you create the right atmosphere they can deliver phenomenal things and contribute hugely to what the team can achieve. The diversity has also meant that the company's products are more inclusive too, which can help achieve clients' goals as well."

Operating since 2019, the company's business and employment model has proven success and the company's turnover has continued to grow. It regularly measures its social impact using a fellow local CIC, and is committed to a circular economy, often sharing business with local organisations that have a similar ethos.

Index of figures

Figure 1	The cost of ill health, Public Health England	13
Figure 2	Proportion of employees with different low job quality aspects reporting fair or poor health, UK 2016-17, The Health Foundation	14
Figure 3	The Good Work Charter	15
Figure 4	Economically active 16-64yr olds in each deprivation quintile by general health, Southampton 2021	21
Figure 5	Economically inactive 16-64yr olds in each deprivation quintile by general health, Southampton 2021	22
Figure 6	Healthy life expectancy of males at birth by decile of deprivation and employment rate, England 2015-17, The Health Foundation	25
Figure 7	Self-rated health and employment rate by household income, adults aged up to 55yrs, UK 2019-20	27
Figure 8	Number of chronic conditions of GP-registered patients by age band, Southampton, February 2021	30
Figure 9	Proportion of patients with 3 or more chronic conditions by age group and IMD national quintile, Southampton, February 2021	31
Figure 10	Long Covid prevalence: patients registered with a GP in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICS and England (National), GP Patient Survey 2023	32
Figure 11	Southampton, South East and England employment rate (aged 16-64), 2011-2022	44
Figure 12	Number of people aged 16-64yrs inactive due to long-term sickness, UK, Office for National Statistics	45
Figure 13	Percentage of people economically inactive due to long-term sickness, 2010-2022	46
Figure 14	Southampton employment rate (aged 16-64), disabled and not disabled	47
Figure 15	Southampton employment rate by health conditions	47

1. Work and health

Employment is a key building block of good health and wellbeing

In Southampton there are significant differences between people's health: almost 8 years difference in male life expectancy (3.4 years for females) between the most and least deprived areas of the city². This means lives are being cut short. Almost every part of our lives affects our health and our life expectancy in one way or another, for example, our housing, education and the type of job that we do. Work is a public health issue and a recent detailed review by The Lancet underlined the growing need for work to be conceptualised explicitly as a major social determinant of health³.

Those who are able to work spend a large proportion of their waking lives in work, and estimates suggest between 20% and a third of our total lives are spent at work. Workplaces are an important setting, and have a key influence on people's health. What we do whilst at work, how we do it, how we feel about it and what our work enables us to do in our home lives, and into the future, can hugely impact our short-term and long-term health. It can influence our families and our communities, and can even impact how long we live.

Employers can choose to have a strongly positive influence on the conditions that influence people's health. Organisations that have an important presence and are tied to Southampton through their mission, histories, relationships or assets ('anchor institutions') can have a particularly long-lasting and strong impact on the health of the local population⁴.

Investing in employee health is part of good corporate social responsibility. But in addition to this moral argument, investment in workplace health and wellbeing can contribute to performance and competitiveness, and help the achievement of a company's goals^{5,6}. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce. Providing health and wellbeing support can improve motivation and engagement amongst employees, as well as encourage people to stay in the workforce for longer. Furthermore, customers and job-seekers often seek out ethical companies, good employers and those with a strong social purpose⁷. Employers may also find their customer base reducing when poor workplaces practices are exposed.

An unhealthy workforce can be problematic for business. Ill health can result in unproductive presenteeism, sickness absence, early retirement, staff shortages and higher staff turnover. Losing unwell people from the workforce means key skills and knowledge are also lost. It is a waste of investment and can be costly. A population that is unwell can also cause difficulties for recruitment.

At a macro level, the cost of ill health to the UK economy is estimated to be around £100 billion, and approximately 1 in 4 employees report having a physical health condition⁸ - see Figure 1. According to the Confederation of British Industry, 63% of years lost to poor health are in the working age population⁹. In cities like Southampton with higher deprivation and widening inequalities there will be an even more pronounced disproportionate impact on more deprived populations, and greater potential to effect change through workplaces.

² [Life expectancy \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/life-expectancy)

³ [Work as a social determinant of health in high-income countries: past, present, and future - The Lancet](https://www.thelancet.com/publications/series/2018/01)

⁴ [What is an anchor institution? | CLES](#)

⁵ [Health matters: health and work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/health-matters/health-and-work)

⁶ [World Business Council for Sustainable Development \(wbcsd.org\)](https://www.wbcsd.org/)

⁷ [The Business of Health Equity: The Marmot Review for Industry - IHE \(instituteoftheequity.org\)](https://www.instituteoftheequity.org/)

⁸ [Health matters: health and work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/health-matters/health-and-work), data from 2018

⁹ [Work Health Index: benchmark and develop your employee health offer | CBI](https://www.cbi.co.uk/Work-Health-Index)

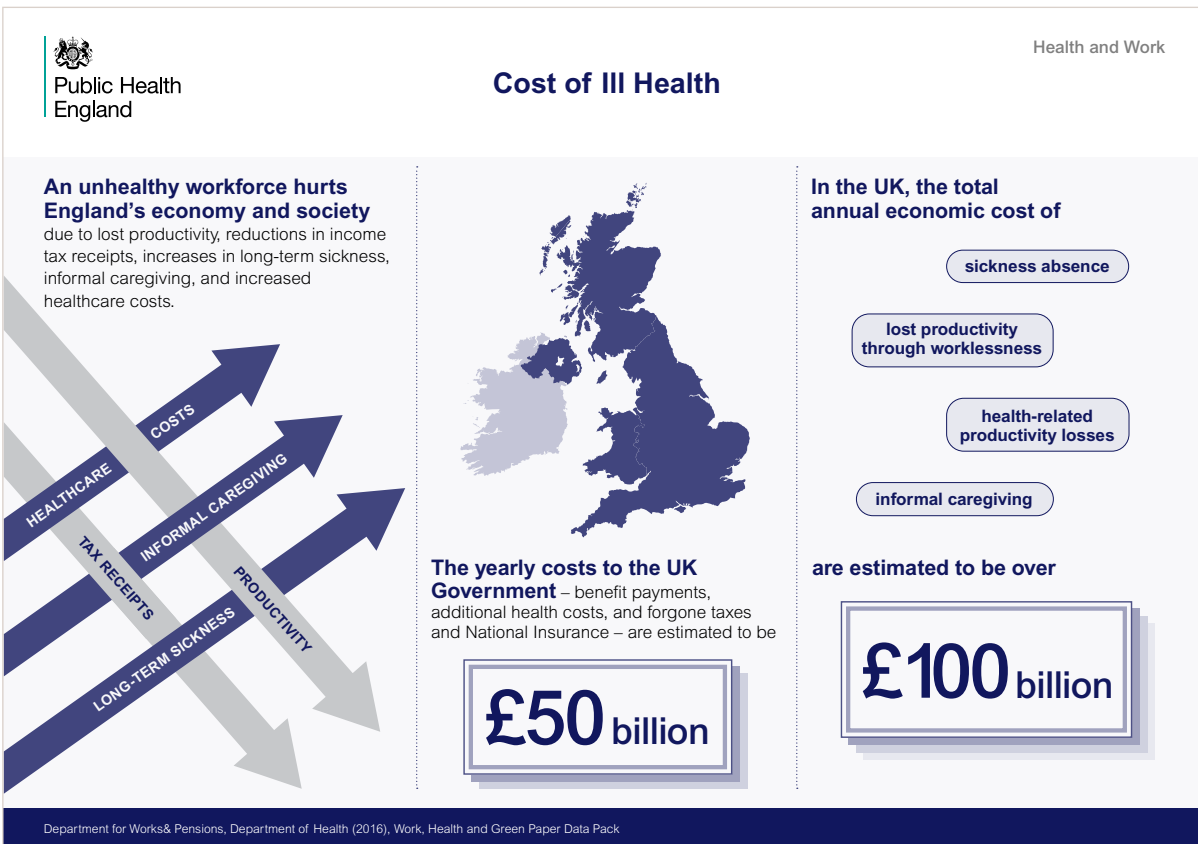


Figure 1 - The cost of ill health, Public Health England¹⁰

Good work

Being in work can be good for health. Employment provides people with income which supports standards of living and can engender a sense of stability and security. It also enables people to have social connections, a sense of worth and of contributing to society and a feeling of fulfilment. All these elements have an influence on physical and mental health. But it is important that work is of good quality and employment is fair. Feeling insecure about employment and income can be hugely stressful, which takes its toll on health. Doing work that is hazardous and unsafe without appropriate safeguards poses risks to physical and mental health. Similarly, working in a job of poor quality, for example with no opportunity for progression or autonomy, can be dispiriting and bad for health. There is an association between poor quality work and poor health – see Figure 2.

¹⁰ [PHE_WH_infographics_V18_3.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

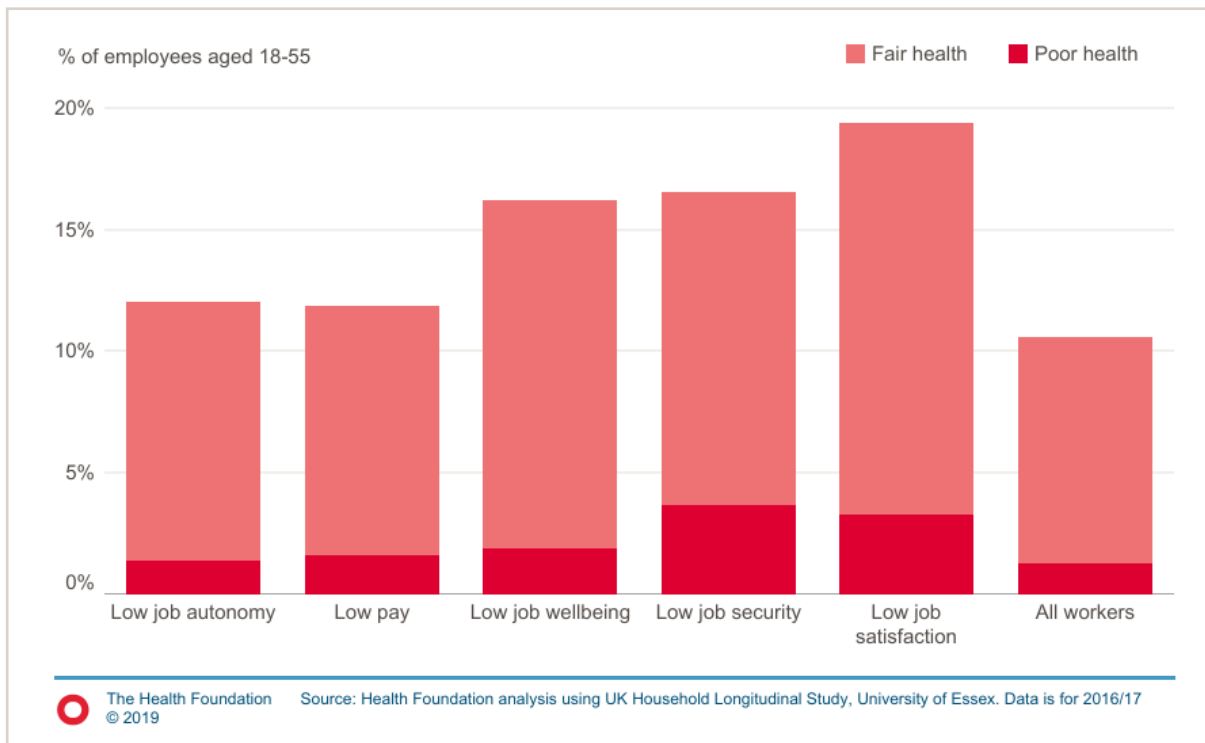


Figure 2 - Proportion of employees with different low job quality aspects reporting fair or poor health, UK 2016-17, The Health Foundation¹¹

Working in secure roles that pay and treat people fairly and with dignity can enable people to thrive. It can also reduce the pressure on local support services¹². The Good Work Charter¹³ (see Figure 3) from the Institute for the Future of Work¹⁴ provides a comprehensive framework about what makes a good quality job by setting out ten principles of ‘good work’. It is a helpful set of principles for employers to use to evaluate their workplace policies and practices against.



¹¹ [Job quality \(health.org.uk\)](http://health.org.uk)
¹² [Good Work Project | Local Government Association](http://www.local.gov.uk/good-work-project)
¹³ [The Good Work Charter - IFOW](http://www.ifow.org/good-work-charter)
¹⁴ [Institute for the Future of Work \(ifow.org\)](http://www.ifow.org)

The Good Work Charter

- 1 Access**
Everyone should have access to good work
- 2 Fair pay**
Everyone should be fairly paid
- 3 Fair conditions**
Everyone should work on fair conditions set out on fair terms
- 4 Equality**
Everyone should be treated equally and without discrimination
- 5 Dignity**
Work should promote dignity
- 6 Autonomy**
Work should promote autonomy
- 7 Wellbeing**
Work should promote physical and mental wellbeing
- 8 Support**
Everyone should have access to institutions and people who can represent their interests
- 9 Participation**
Everyone should be able to take part in determining and improving working conditions
- 10 Learning**
Everyone should have access to lifelong learning and career guidance

Figure 3 - The Good Work Charter¹⁵

The Southampton economy and workforce

Although the Southampton economy increased by 5.0% between 2020 and 2021¹⁶, the national economic context of high inflation, high interest rates and a potential recession on the horizon, coupled with the legacy of covid makes it challenging to summarise Southampton's current economic position.

The Good Work Monitor¹⁷, also from the Institute for the Future of Work, ranks Southampton 88th out of 117 local authorities in England, which is lower than the city's nearest neighbours. More positively, PWC Good Growth 2023¹⁸ ranks Southampton within the top 10% of cities for good growth, and the Good Work Monitor ranks Southampton at 62 in relation to its *potential* to

15 [The Good Work Charter - IFOW](#)

16 [Economic assessment \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#). All economic indicators quoted in this report are from this assessment unless otherwise stated.

17 [The Good Work Monitor \(ifow.org\)](#)

18 [PWC Good Growth 2023](#)

achieve the conditions for Good Work. In Southampton we have a detailed understanding of the economic environment of our city through our Economic Assessment¹⁹ and Southampton remains a major area for employment opportunities. Improved employment conditions and workplace health are achievable in Southampton provided we understand and share what needs to be done.

Geographical and historical factors

Southampton has a long and rich history as a port city with strong industry and manufacturing. Over hundreds of years its maritime location has brought significant trade and settlement, and has driven the prosperity and health of the city's businesses and residents. Now designated a Freeport, the aims of the Solent port area include attracting investment, job creation and supporting innovation – aspirations that could have a positive impact on population health.

Some of Southampton's health opportunities and challenges can partially be attributed to its geography and modern-day industrial history. As Sir Chris Whitty noted in his 2021 Chief Medical Officer annual report²⁰, a city's location on the coast means it is more likely to have greater health challenges and higher rates of preventable disease. This is due to a number of reasons more common to coastal towns: declining industry, limited transport and the impact on the labour market, an older age profile of residents, and a higher proportion of houses of multiple occupation which are linked with ill health and deprivation. The shoreline can also limit catchment areas for the health and care workforce, which can impact on recruitment. For Southampton, the impact of the large international port also has current and historic health impacts, for example it is a potential site of entry of communicable disease. There are also environmental impacts on health, for example from air pollution. Historically the type of work available at the port was largely manual, and this type of strenuous work can be a factor in poor musculoskeletal health, which may have left a legacy today in the health of some of the city's retired residents. There may be other health legacies from historical Southampton industry. For example, the city has higher rates of mesothelioma, an aggressive form of cancer, which may stem from the Southampton ship building industry and its wide use of asbestos in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. British American Tobacco also operated a factory in the city between 1913 and 2006.

Since the decline of manufacturing there has been a shift in Southampton towards more service industry including health, education, retail, business administration support and professional and scientific services. These types of work bring different health opportunities and challenges to the city's working population. For example, there may be challenges from more shift working and sedentary desk-based activity, but also opportunities from increased innovation and new ways of working. We look in more detail at what the future of work may bring to the city on page 34, and how this could impact health, recognising how the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a societal shift in how we approach and value work and our working environment, and how closely work can link to our health.

¹⁹ [Economic assessment \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/economic-assessment)

²⁰ [Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2021: health in coastal communities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities)

Southampton innovation in business, growth and health

Business, skills and employment support

Significant effort is being invested to drive economic development, business skills, employment support and access to good work in the city. Southampton's new Renaissance Board, comprising key economic partners, has been established to steer future growth, strategic skills and sustainable development and investment. Led by the business community, Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is evolving but brings together work to secure a more prosperous and sustainable future for the Solent area. A recently awarded grant from the Levelling Up Fund is expected to deliver £98.8million of monetised benefits²¹. This strategic work is challenging, and planning for the longer-term is supported by practical steps across individual organisations and teams.

Teams across the city are already engaged and working hard to increase access to work and promote good work and health and wellbeing. With a strong raft of measures, including programmes and resources in skills development, apprenticeships, adult education and community learning, Southampton is well equipped to help support people into work, stay in work and progress in their careers.

The SCC Employment Support Team provides help and advice to disadvantaged and disabled people to help them find work, stay in work and access training opportunities. Aiming to remove societal barriers to work, they step in where people may be worried that their health condition, disability or other disadvantage could be affecting their chance of employment.

Programmes of adult education are also widely available in the city. English and maths help is available as well as the Multiply Numeracy Programme²² which helps adults improve their numeracy skills. These skills can be the key to unlocking better job opportunities and earning potential, as well as empowering people in daily life and enabling them to help enhance their family's life chances.

At the Council we also partner with colleagues across the Solent region to provide support and services to businesses to enable them to grow and thrive, and part of that includes an emphasis on delivering for good staff health and wellbeing. Solent Business and Skills Solutions is a new service that launched in Autumn 2023 to support growth in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by delivering tailored training programmes, workshops and one-to-one support, including on The Good Work Charter, sustainability and health and wellbeing.

One aspect of the service's new strategy is to embed a new digital badging system to enable people to demonstrate and validate the skills and experience they possess in a digital format. This will be particularly helpful for those who may not hold traditional certificates and evidence of skills and qualifications, thereby opening up the labour market to more people, enabling them to progress, increase their potential and ultimately improve their health. Roll-out of the programme is in the early stages, and with increased numbers of adopters and optimal integration it is hoped that it could be transformative for many people in the city.

²¹ [Southampton City Council is delighted one of its Levelling Up Fund bids has won!](#)

²² [Multiply - Skills for Life](#)

Case Study: Digital badging in Southampton, Solent Apprenticeship & Skills Hub

Digital badging holds great potential for the Southampton community. By implementing a robust badging system, individuals can acquire and showcase specific skills and competencies in a digital format, providing a clear and portable representation of their achievements. This can not only empower community members by validating their capabilities, but also enable employers and educational institutions to easily identify and verify relevant skills. As a result, digital badging could open up new opportunities for Southampton residents, connecting them with industry-specific pathways that match their skill sets. Whether it's in sectors like technology, healthcare, hospitality, or mental health and wellbeing, digital badges will serve as valuable credentials, helping individuals stand out in the job market, facilitating career growth within the community. Moreover, the badging system can help the Southampton community to build a culture of lifelong learning and skills development, encouraging residents to continuously enhance their knowledge and stay competitive in an evolving economy.

Navigatr is the next generation of Digital Badging platform to create, issue, and manage digital badges and pathways, enabling people to discover new learning opportunities and to utilise the powerful search engine within the platform. Residents can login to Navigatr and discover badges available to them, using key word algorithms, location and badging maps. They will also be able to search for roles relevant to badges they have achieved, discover pathways to specific sectors, and search for Southampton based organisations who offer their own digital badges.

Ultimately, Digital Badging gives Southampton residents and organisations an opportunity to showcase all learning, training, volunteering and wellbeing activities potentially contributing to the overall prosperity and vitality of the Southampton community by equipping its members with the means to access meaningful employment and professional advancement.

Business summits and networks

Local summits between partners and the business sector have been taking place on the economic, business and skills aspirations for the city. The vision for Southampton is for an ambitious and entrepreneurial economy, with an inclusive workforce and a growing skill base, where skills and the labour market are closely matched, technology and green sectors are thriving, and the economy meets the NetZero challenge. There is emphasis on ensuring that more of the wealth generated in the city remains in Southampton through various community wealth building initiatives under the Southampton Pound banner²³ e.g. social value in procurement. The city also has an Economic and Green Growth Strategy 2020-2030 that calls for a partnership approach towards a greener, fairer and healthier city²⁴. Through this collaboration the Good Work Charter provides a valuable ideal model to which businesses can aspire. By building a collective of like-minded organisations, driven by strong local leadership, the benefits of delivering good work for the health of the Southampton population can begin to be realised.

²³ For more information and case studies see [Southampton Pound - Social Value and Community Wealth Building in Southampton](#)
²⁴ [Southampton Economic & Green Growth Strategy](#)

Local businesses themselves have taken the initiative towards improving the wellbeing of their workforce with a new network of wellbeing leads where progress towards targets and good practice can be shared. It is hoped the network will grow in size and influence as it becomes established and good work is promoted as a strong framework for action.

Draft Southampton City Vision Local Plan

In 2022 the Draft Southampton City Vision Local Plan was developed, setting out ambitions for how Southampton City Council will deliver new homes, work spaces, infrastructure, and facilities – all key building blocks for health – in the city in the next 20 years and beyond. In a consultation about the draft Local Plan, respondents (including residents and businesses) showed strongest support for objectives of the plan that related to the environment: to protecting and enhancing green spaces and reducing emissions. Respondents also showed strong support for delivering the right mix of new homes, including affordable homes, and for achieving social value and benefit to residents from economic growth and development²⁵. The drafting and consultation processes have been incredibly important in raising the profile of the health needs of the city's residents and the health impacts of the economy and local developments.

Anchor institutions

Anchor institutions are large organisations that are unlikely to relocate and have a significant stake or influence in their local area. They can influence the health of a population and reduce health inequalities in five key ways:

- Widening access to good work
- Working closely with partners across a place
- Purchasing locally and for social benefit
- Using buildings and spaces to support communities
- Reducing environmental impact

In Southampton, attention to the beneficial impact on population health of organisations in our health and care system is growing, including through a focus in the new Health and Care Partnership.

Case study: Carnival UK

Carnival UK is the operating company for P&O Cruises and Cunard, and has its headquarters in Southampton city centre. It has developed a range of personal and professional welfare resources, including in-house teams of Occupational Health, Wellbeing and Mental Health First Aiders, an online wellbeing hub and Employee Assistance and Wellbeing programmes. People are supported with what's most important to them.

The wellbeing programme is underpinned by the Five Ways to Wellbeing²⁶ which is brought to life through a comprehensive programme of events and activity. Three examples of this that focus on Connect, Keep Learning and Be Active are our Menopause Café and Cancer Café and a spotlight on cycling to work.

²⁵ [Quick Survey Results | Your City Your Say Southampton](#)

²⁶ [Five ways to wellbeing | New Economics Foundation](#)

Menopause Café

Launching in March 2023, the Menopause Café supports and educates colleagues on the subject and symptoms of perimenopause and menopause. Featuring both face-to-face and online events to ensure access for hybrid and permanent home working colleagues, the programme includes informal catch-up sessions alongside external guest speakers. To date, menopause specialists, nutritionists, and personal trainers have held sessions covering the topics of sleep, hidden symptoms, diet and exercise.

80 staff members have also joined a dedicated menopause Teams channel where everyone is invited to share support and knowledge, signpost webinars and any other useful information. Four members of staff have also been enabled to complete Menopause Champion training to support colleagues as Carnival UK Menopause Champions.

Cancer Café

The Cancer Café began in March 2023 and is run by the Occupational Health team and three colleagues living with cancer. As the Cancer Café was set up with the key focus of connection, the informal drop-in sessions are held face-to-face in the office. In each session resources are shared and colleagues offer a source of support. The team is currently exploring ways to expand this service to support carers and family also going through this journey.

Cycle to work

As part of the Be Active programme, the Carnival UK team is working with the company's Cycling Champion to encourage sustainable travel and increase the number of people choosing this route to work. Investment has included improvements to the shower and changing facilities, developing gender-neutral and gender specific facilities and providing spare towels and toiletries free of charge, alongside installing a cycle repair station on-site.

During Love to Ride's 'Cycle September', Carnival UK was placed 4th in the Solent area and 13th in the UK on the Love to Ride app by clocking up the most miles – a fantastic result! As a thank you to the cyclists, a complimentary breakfast was held where colleagues could connect with each other and enjoy drinks and breakfast treats.

As a result of the focus on cycling to work, Carnival UK's dedicated cycling Teams channel now has 50 members and since June 2023, there's been an increase of over 350% in colleagues signed up to the Love to Ride app.

2. Opportunities to improve health through work in the city

The city has made progress in recent years on improving health through work. Economic activity has grown steadily over the past decade²⁷, and there has been a strong shift towards employers making efforts to improve workplace wellbeing, inclusivity and health and safety.

Significant opportunities still remain, with the city having a number of health challenges, and many key health outcomes remaining below national and regional benchmarks. Southampton's overall life expectancy at birth is lower than the England average and shows signs of falling, while healthy life expectancy has remained relatively stable over the last decade. The main causes of death are cancer, followed by circulatory diseases (including heart disease and stroke), respiratory diseases, and mental health and behavioural disorders. There are stark inequalities too, with the chances of dying of one of these causes increasing with deprivation, and large gaps in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between populations living in the most and least deprived areas²⁸.

Southampton's working age population specifically faces a number of health challenges (see pages 30-33 for more detail). Comparing Figure 4 and Figure 5 below, there is a strong relationship in Southampton between being economically active and better health, and between deprivation and poor health²⁹.

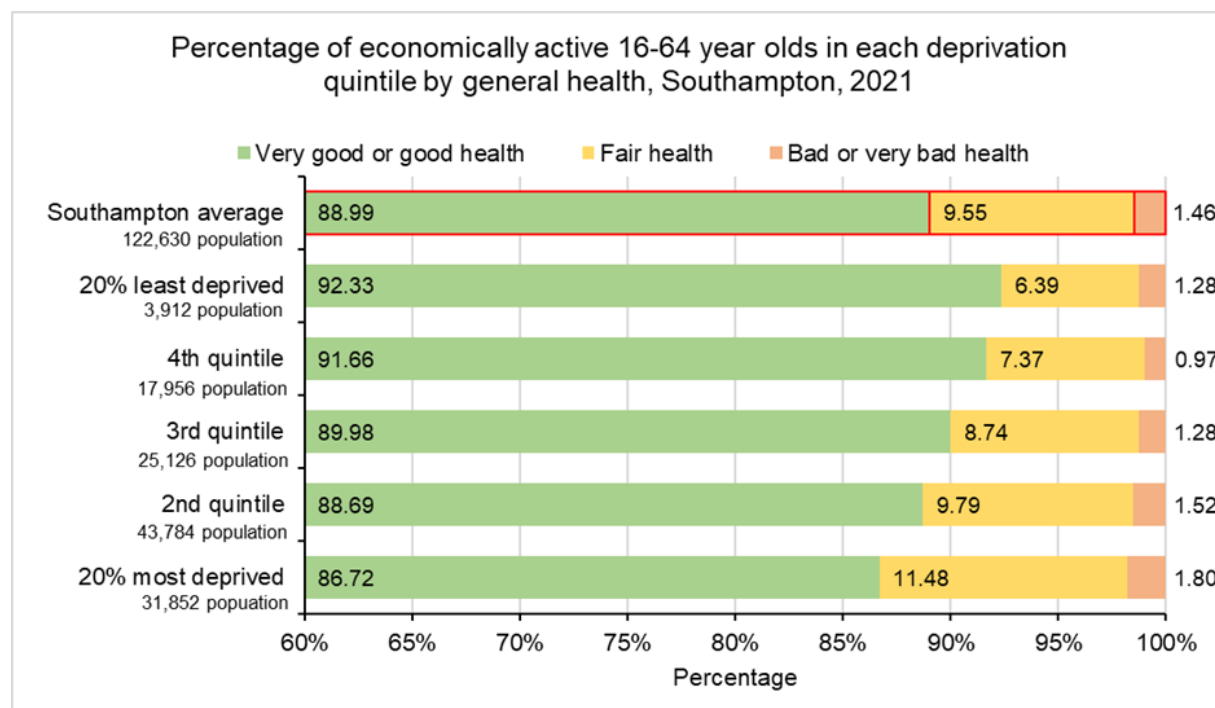


Figure 4 - Economically active 16-64yr olds in each deprivation quintile by general health, Southampton 2021

²⁷ [Economic assessment \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/economic-assessment)

²⁸ For more detail see [Health \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/health)

²⁹ Data for these figures is taken from the 2021 Census. This data was collected during the pandemic when a proportion of people were on furlough. This means that the number of people classed as economically inactive in this dataset may be inflated compared to other sources therefore – see [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/comparing-census-2021-and-labour-force-survey-estimates-of-the-labour-market-england-and-wales) for further details. The latest data from the Annual Population Survey 2022 indicates there are 35,200 people classed as economically inactive in Southampton. However, this data is not available by deprivation quintile.

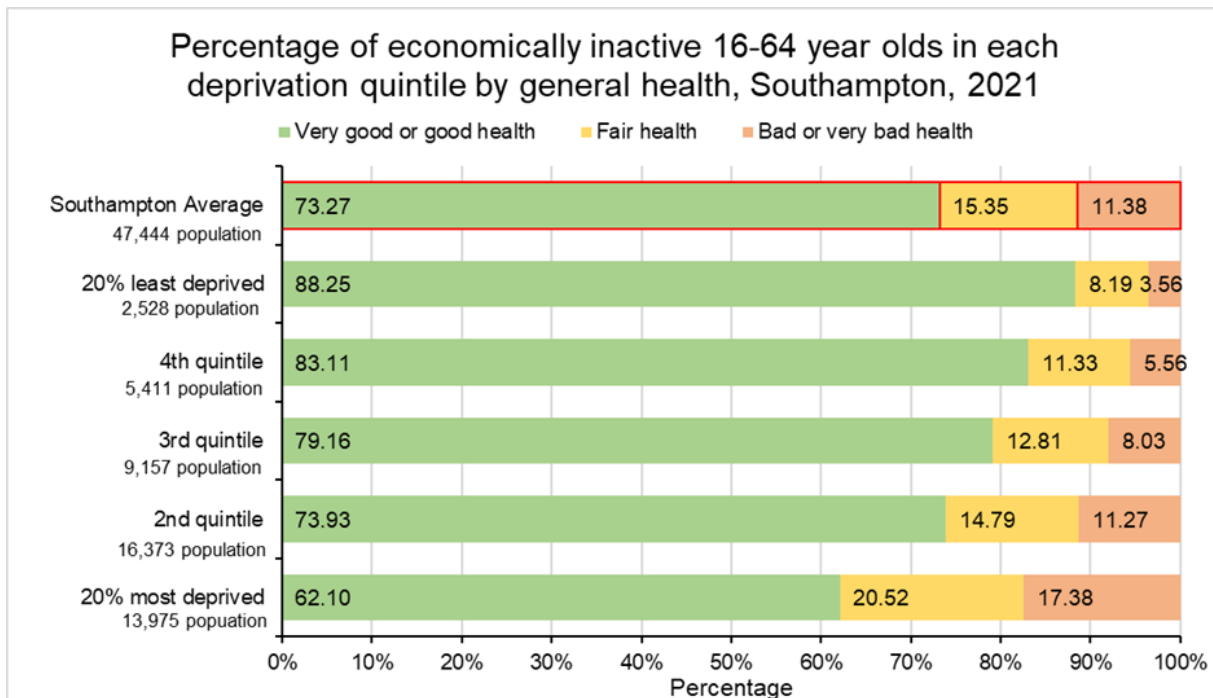


Figure 5 - Economically inactive 16-64yr olds in each deprivation quintile by general health, Southampton 2021

The opportunities to improve health through the working age population are significant therefore.

Recent workforce health challenges and opportunities

We have a timely opportunity to build on recent attention and focus on the importance of economic development, good work and fair employment in the city. There is opportunity in widening access to good work and fair employment – not just for the health of our residents but also for our local organisations who may be able to access and recruit to meet skills and capacity gaps, and benefit from the economic advantages that diverse workforces bring³⁰.

The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic on business and jobs cannot be ignored however. The negative economic impact was greater in Southampton compared to Office for National Statistics comparators and the national economy, with industry productivity declining. However, the total number of jobs in 2021 recovered to 2019 levels. Over this period the number of employee jobs in the private sector declined, with the largest percentage loss among part-time employees. Conversely, the number of public sector employees increased locally between 2019 and 2021, and this was driven by increases in the number of part time employees. The continuing recovery from the pandemic provides opportunity for businesses to review their strategies and to invest in their staff for productivity gains.

³⁰ E.g. [The Everyone Economy - CMI \(managers.org.uk\)](https://www.managers.org.uk)

As a result of wages being unable to keep up with unprecedented inflation experienced since late 2021, 'real' terms pay declined in the UK and Southampton between 2021 and 2022. Those living in lower income houses are generally more sensitive to increases in inflation due to a larger proportion of income being spent on essentials. A Southampton City Council Cost of Living survey in January 2023³¹ found that to counter the effects of increases in prices, 29% of respondents were looking for a job that paid more money, 26% were working additional hours, and 10% were working in more than one job. Where households are struggling to afford food and fuel, standards of living will be affected and mental and physical health impacted. The crisis has encouraged communities and public/Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations to urge residents to ensure they are aware of all the benefits they can claim as well as the local services that can support those who are struggling. It has also given employers opportunity to review how they support staff, especially those on lower incomes or otherwise at more risk of financial difficulty.

There are also workplace challenges and opportunities in the form of new ways of working. The increase in working from home due to the pandemic has both benefits and disadvantages. For example, increased flexibility has meant some previously excluded groups are now able to enter the workforce e.g. those with caring responsibilities or ill health, and people are able to have a better work-life balance. A new Flexible Working Bill, which received Royal Assent in July 2023, will extend the right to request flexible working to millions more workers³². However, there are increases in inequality with some jobs (often less well-paid roles) being unable to be carried out from home, meaning those people are unable to benefit from this flexible approach. A 2023 Chartered Institute for Personnel Development survey found nearly half of respondents did not have the opportunity to work from home or use flexitime³³. Similarly, other groups may be excluded from roles that are exclusively home-working e.g. those without a quiet space in their homes for a desk. Working from home can also increase feelings of isolation, and if the workspace is not adequate there could be an increased risk of musculoskeletal problems.

The rise of the 'gig economy' may be another challenge for provision of good work in the city, with approximately 10% of the UK labour force in insecure work, with more women than men having insecure work and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black/African/Caribbean being the ethnic groups most likely to experience insecure work in 2021 (20.5%, 19.9% and 18.6% respectively)³⁴. Insecurity is often compounded by low pay, with people on the lowest pay being more likely to be in insecure work. Insecure contracts with poor working conditions can mean an unstable income, which adds to feelings of stress and anxiety. Damage from this stress can accumulate and put a strain on people's bodies, which can bring on physical and mental health problems such as poor sleep, high blood pressure, or weakened immune systems. Recent negative media attention on the rise of insecure employment has raised awareness of the human and social impact of these types of roles, and as a consequence reputational risk is a factor for employers considering using this model.

³¹ [Cost of living survey \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-survey)

³² [Millions to benefit from new flexible working measures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-to-benefit-from-new-flexible-working-measures)

³³ [CIPD Good Work Index 2023: Summary report](https://www.cipd.com/resources/research-and-analysis/insights/articles-2023/cipd-good-work-index-2023-summary-report)

³⁴ [Percentage of employees in insecure work by region/nation, sex, age, ethnicity and income - The Health Foundation](https://www.healthfoundation.org.uk/insights/percentage-of-employees-in-insecure-work-by-region/nation-sex-age-ethnicity-and-income)

Case study: Southampton City Council

As part of a new strategic approach towards developing, retaining and supporting its staff, the Council recognises the importance of understanding its workforce – its demography and its needs. Results of a staff survey are informing the development of a new 'Our People' strategy, with the involvement of staff Ambassadors, which includes workplace wellbeing and good work elements.

With a dedicated wellbeing and inclusion lead, committed HR and health and safety teams and a comprehensive range of supportive policies and measures available to staff, including paying the real living wage, the council's good work offer is positive and comparable to most other public sector employers. Policies that support good work include workplace equality and equal pay, flexible working (available to the majority of staff), sound learning and development opportunities (including strong support for apprenticeships), supportive attendance management, and sickness absence and sick pay provision. The council is also a smoke-free employer with assistance in place to support staff to quit smoking. Social value is embedded in procurement.

A clear, user-friendly intranet provides staff with direct links to internal and external wellbeing support and organisations. These include hints and tips on maintaining good physical and mental wellbeing, signposting to tools and resources on financial, social and relationship wellbeing, and a corporate occupational health offer and employee assistance programme. Wellbeing resources are highlighted in a regular wellbeing e-bulletin, and there is training and support for managers to model and foster positive wellbeing behaviours, as well as supporting people experiencing ill-health, stress or trauma. Subsidised eye tests and glasses are available for employees using display screen equipment.

Recent wellbeing developments in the council have included support and advice about working remotely, revitalisation of mental health first aiders and wellbeing champions, campaigns covering the menopause (including a regular Menopause Café), men's health and cost of living, and the relaunch of staff affinity groups e.g. LGBTQ+, Beauty in Diversity and Ethnicity (BIDE), carers, women, and disability in the workplace.

Good Work Principles in Southampton

Poor health can be a barrier to accessing work, and so supporting a healthier working age population is important for both Southampton's residents and its future prosperity as a city. Access to skills and learning are also a barrier to work for many. Access to work tends to be lowest in those groups where good work and employment could offer the greatest benefit to health and wellbeing, for example in people living in more deprived areas, or people with a disability or health condition. We know that Southampton's working age population has multiple health needs too. These issues and inequities are explored in more detail below and in Appendix II. There is an opportunity therefore to further both wealth and health through increasing access to good work and fair employment, with a focus on those at greatest risk of poor health and wellbeing in the city. Large anchor organisations can have a particularly important role in driving improved health through availability of good work due to their scale and long term presence in the city.

Access to employment

There is a strong correlation between higher healthy life expectancy and higher employment rates, especially for males³⁵ (see Figure 6). It is crucial that Southampton's labour market adapts strategies to widen access to work if lives are not to be lived longer in poor health, and unfair differences in health are to be tackled.

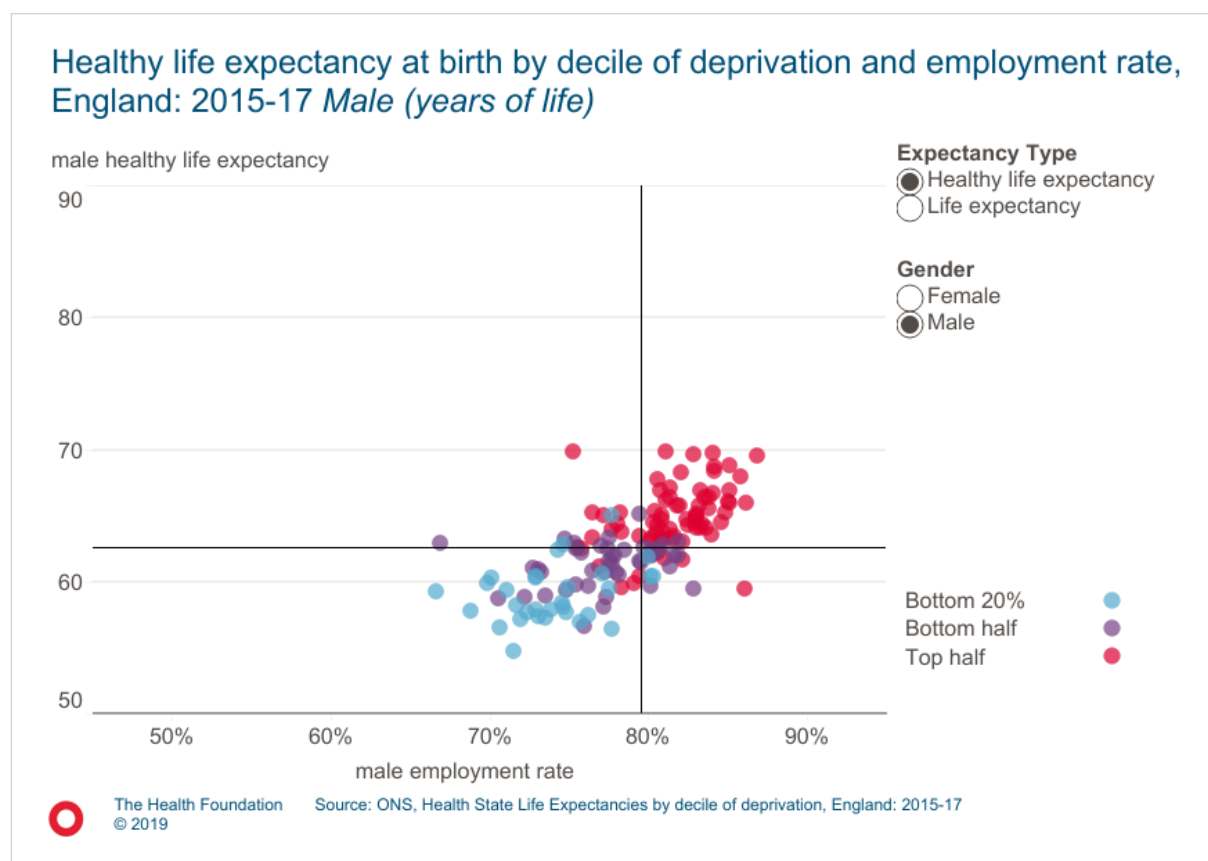


Figure 6 - Healthy life expectancy of males at birth by decile of deprivation and employment rate, England 2015-17, The Health Foundation

Detailed data can be found in Appendix II, but in summary, in Southampton, there are some good indications of progress in employment, with some ongoing areas of focus:

- Unemployment is declining: this will be important to monitor alongside the proportion of the population claiming out of work benefits, particularly with current economic uncertainty.
- The city's employment rate is comparable to England and Southeast averages.
- Economic activity in those of working age is similar to England and increasing in Southampton slightly.
- Long-term illness is a significant and increasingly common reason for economic inactivity. Inactivity due to long term illness rose faster in younger people aged 16-34yrs than other groups.

³⁵ [Employment and unemployment \(health.org.uk\)](http://employmentandunemployment.health.org.uk)

- There are inequities in employment rates by population group, with women, people from ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, people with health conditions, and people living in deprived areas having lower rates. We have significantly higher rates of 16-17yr olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) than England.
- Those who have caring responsibilities for friends or family with illness are restricted in their ability to access paid employment. Similarly, people with young families can be priced out of employment due to high childcare costs.

Definitions³⁶

Economically active: People aged 16yrs and over who are either in employment or unemployed.

Economically inactive: People aged 16-64yrs who are without a job and who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

Employed: People aged 16yrs and over who do one hour or more of paid work per week, including employed and self-employed work.

Unemployed: People aged 16yrs and over without a job, who have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks.

If ill-health is a barrier to local residents entering the workforce and having access to good jobs and fair employment that can benefit health, we have a widespread interest across local organisations in supporting good health and wellbeing for our local working age population. In Southampton, with economic activity picking up, inclusive recruitment and retention strategies are now needed that target and enable groups that have been less likely to enter or remain in the city's workforce. This could include consideration of any barriers to physically accessing the workplace, for example due to a lack of public or private transport. Traditional models and locations for helping people into work may need to be adapted to bring employment support services into more familiar or local venues, such as community hubs for example.

Health impact: We know that being in work is an important factor for a person's feelings of self-worth, agency, identity and social standing, all of which feed into health and wellbeing. Health outcomes can be worsened if people feel that they have limited 'life potential' or control over their own lives, and this includes work. Long-term unemployment and sickness absence can be harmful to health and there can often be a cyclical pattern of unemployment leading to poorer health, which leads to difficulties accessing or staying in work. Increasing workforce participation rates, with a particular focus on previously excluded groups, can raise collective wellness, through improved mental health and increased income alongside standards of living.

Business impact: Increasing workforce participation rates and having a fairer, more equitable approach to recruitment and retention reduces wastage, increases innovation and enables better productivity.

Societal impact: There will be a significant impact on society and the economy with more people in work and widened access to work, for example through reduced welfare and healthcare costs and a more cohesive and fairer society where more people can participate.

³⁶ [A guide to labour market statistics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

Pay and income

Increasing income is associated with improvements in health, and people with lower income are more likely to be living in poor health – see Figure 7. A minimum income is needed to enable the basics of a healthy life to be affordable, and the Real Living Wage³⁷ is a rate of pay that is independently calculated based on the things people need to be able to live. According to data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in 2022 approximately two thirds of adults of working age who live in poverty live in a household where at least one adult is employed³⁸. It is crucial that pay gaps are addressed and that rates of pay and income are set at a fair level to enable everyone to live a healthy life.

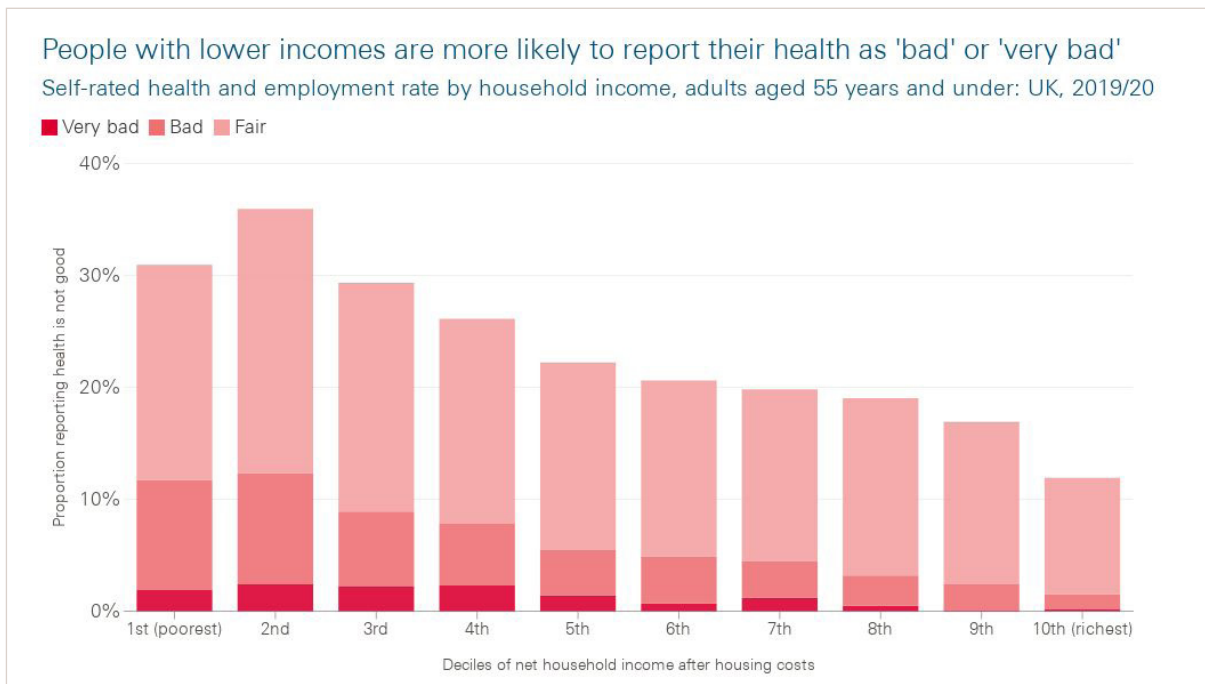


Figure 7 - Self-rated health and employment rate by household income, adults aged up to 55yrs, UK 2019-20

Detailed data can be found in Appendix II, but in summary, in Southampton:

- A January 2023 residents' survey³⁹ showed that the cost of living and below inflation pay rises are having an impact on people's financial stability, with 34% of respondents describing their household finances as 'difficult' or 'very difficult'. The responses of 41% of respondents indicated that they were food insecure.
- Residents earn less on average than those who commute from outside the city.
- There is a 14.6% weekly pay gap between male and female residents.

In Southampton, employers and wider agencies continue to make a difference, and can do yet more for those on the lowest incomes, especially during periods of high inflation and the rising cost of essentials.

³⁷ [What is it? | Living Wage Foundation](#)

³⁸ [Working age poverty: Working households and individuals | JRE](#)

³⁹ [Cost of living survey \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#)

Health impact: Having enough income/earnings to be able to afford the essentials of life is crucial for good mental and physical health as well as for dignity and being able to participate and contribute to society. People in poverty and deprivation have poorer health outcomes than those who are better off. With lower income, people have less choice and control about how they live their lives. Often healthier options and behaviours are out of reach when incomes are low.

Business impact: Paying employees well and fairly attracts the best staff, and an increased paybill may be offset by positive impacts on business innovation and productivity.

Societal impact: If rates of pay are fair and enough to cover essential needs, more people will be enabled to participate in society and contribute to community cohesion.

Skills and learning

To support healthier lives and protect from disadvantage in later life, the ability to access learning and skills is crucial. Like work, education and skills are a public health issue. Those with reduced opportunities to gain qualifications or acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills need particular support to be able to access work and progress to a healthier future. The available support mechanisms can achieve good results provided those that need them most are enabled to access them.

More information can be found in Appendix II, but in summary, in Southampton there are encouraging improvements for the city that employment and skills partners in the city can capitalise on, with the level of qualification among residents potentially improving, particularly over the last two years and the proportion of employers providing staff training is higher than in England overall. However, in 2021, 11.9% of Southampton's economically active population had either no or low qualifications (NVQ Level 1 or below), an increase since 2020.

Health impact: Education can provide a strong base on which to build healthier lives. Access to learning and self-development engenders feelings of being valued and empowered, and enables people to have aspirations and be able to problem-solve, which are all positive for mental health and wellbeing. It unlocks opportunities and allows progression and social mobility, as well as the potential to access increased income and associated living standards.

Business impact: Investing in staff skills can improve productivity, innovation and problem-solving. It can also mean improved staff retention and loyalty as well as knowledge retention.

Societal impact: Access to learning and skills can build people's confidence and self-esteem. It can also enable a better understanding of the world and its culture, people and relationships. All these benefits can help people to participate more in their community and be more resilient to change.

Case study: Red Funnel

Red Funnel is ferry company with a history spanning over 160 years that facilitates over 3 million passenger journeys annually between the Isle of Wight and Southampton. The maritime sector typically attracts a higher proportion of male employees. To proactively address some of the barriers to movement and opportunities this has historically meant for women, Red Funnel has expanded its wellbeing initiatives to support women across all roles, with a particular emphasis on equality for female mariners. This has resulted in the gender pay gap improving by 16.21% since in 2017.

The company defines wellbeing not only in the context of employee emotional and physical health, but also how satisfied someone is with their life, their sense of purpose and how in control they feel. To support this more holistic outlook, a number of initiatives have been implemented:

Menopause Policy: The new 2022 policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, signposts the support available and offers awareness to others within the organisation. Red Funnel has four 'Menopause Champions' who are open to sharing their own experiences to support others. Red Funnel's HR Team is currently working with the Sustainability Officer in consideration of signing the Menopause Workplace Pledge.

Mental Health Awareness: A range of Mental Health courses are available and there are 21 Mental Health First Aiders split across both the Isle of Wight and the mainland. Support is also offered through WeCare (virtual healthcare platform) and Validium (Employee Assistance Plan).

Wellbeing Wednesday: Every week the Wellbeing Wednesday bulletin is published covering practical support, signposting and articles on the four key wellbeing pillars (physical, emotional, financial and social).

Financial Wellbeing: The company offers a range of benefits and rewards including Perkz (a scheme offering discounts on high-street retailers including supermarkets), awards that recognise service and retention, free travel to/from Isle of Wight and 75% discount on South Western Railway. They also offer a 'refer a friend' scheme.

Hybrid Working Model: Red Funnel have adopted a hybrid working model for office-based employees to spend between 40% and 60% in the office per week, offering flexibility that may support childcare or other commitments outside of work.

HR Clinics: 3 HR Clinics are held weekly across the Isle of Wight, the mainland and on the water, extending support to those who may find it challenging to find time to visit clinics whilst working onboard or based in more remote locations.

Sickness Benefit: In 2023 the Private Medical Insurance scheme was extended to all colleagues and in addition, Red Funnel's company sick pay scheme was enhanced.

Flexible Working Request Policy: Red Funnel offers enhanced flexible working rights, over and above the statutory entitlement, allowing applications from day one of employment with no restrictions on the number of applications per year. This includes options to explore job shares.

Talent Management: Programmes available include Leadership Development, Apprenticeships and Mentoring and the Talent Management plan explores areas such as succession planning, performance management, employee retention, and building 'talent pools'.

Health of the Southampton workforce

Multiple chronic conditions

On average, ill health starts at quite an early age in Southampton. By the age of 40-44yrs, over half of residents have at least one long-term condition (see Figure 8), and analysis shows that diagnosis of multiple chronic conditions is happening earlier than it was in 2017.

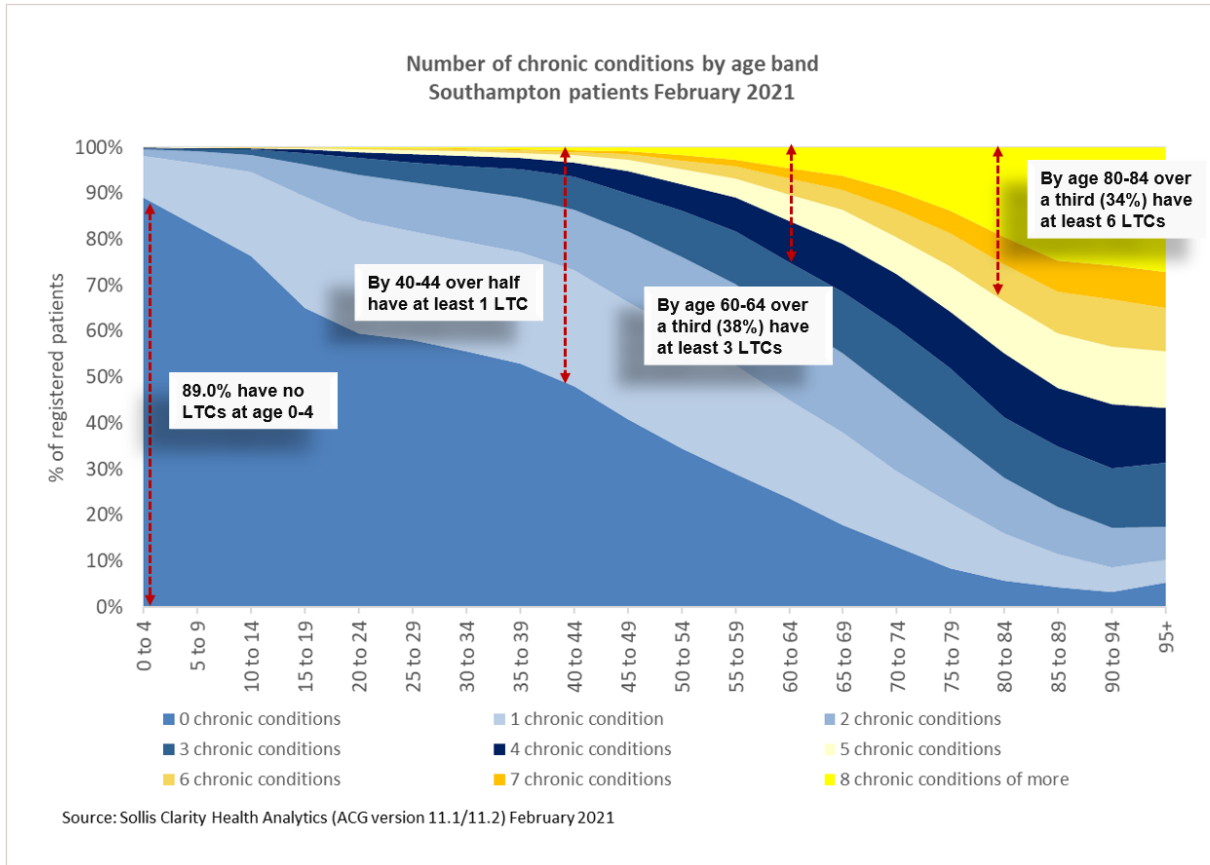


Figure 8 - Number of chronic conditions of GP-registered patients by age band, Southampton, February 2021

There are also inequalities in how early multi-morbidity starts to develop, with people living in the most deprived parts of the city experiencing this earlier in life than those in the least deprived areas (see Figure 9).

Would you describe yourself as having “long COVID”, that is, you are still experiencing symptoms more than 12 weeks after you first had COVID-19, that are not explained by something else?

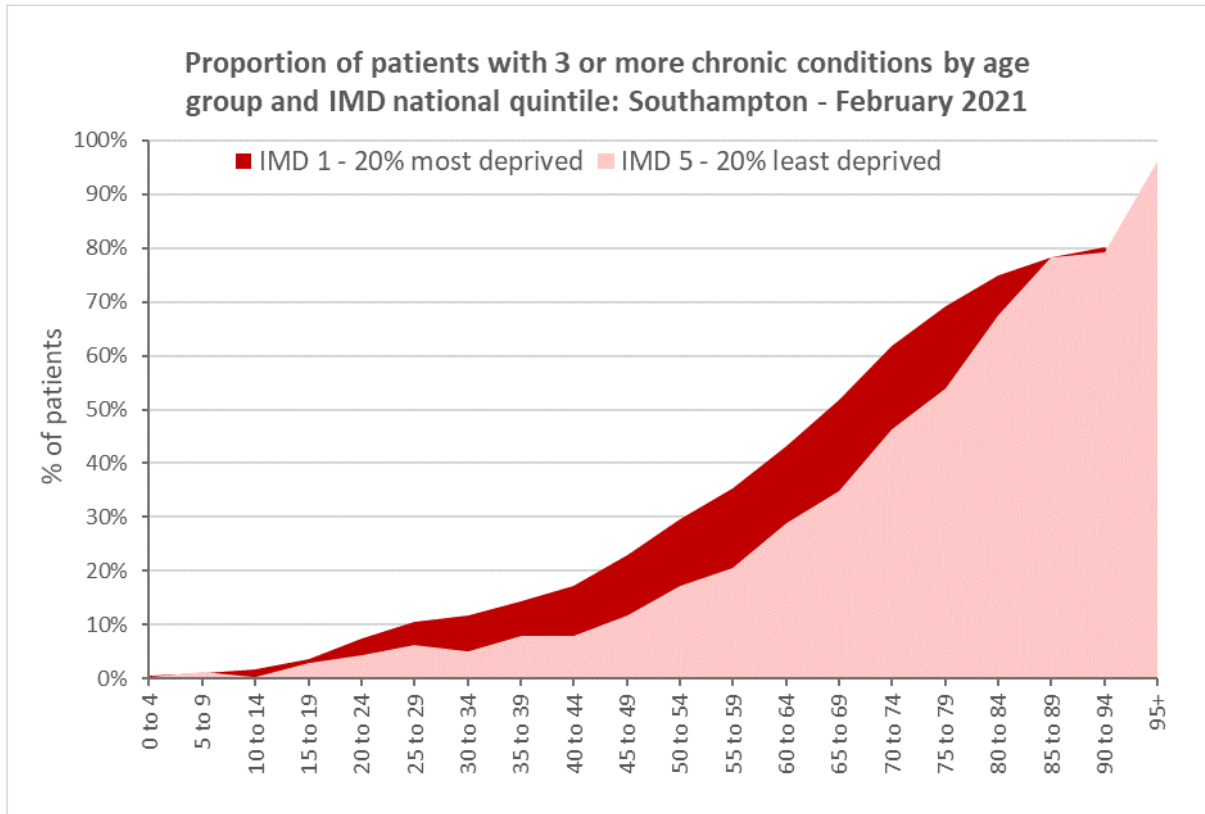


Figure 9 - Proportion of patients with 3 or more chronic conditions by age group and IMD national quintile, Southampton, February 2021

Nationally, the number of people with major illnesses is predicted to rise by 37% by 2040, but the working age population is expected to grow at only 4%⁴⁰. If concerted preventative action is not taken now, this projected high burden of health needs will have significant consequences for society in terms of the provision and funding of care and support. There is a key role for employers in prevention activity.

Long Covid is an emerging long-term disease, and national data shows that it is more prevalent in the working-age population⁴¹. In the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care System, 4% of patients registered with a GP who responded to the national GP Patient Survey reported that they had Long Covid (see Figure 10). Office for National Statistics data shows that 20% of people who have Long Covid report that their daily activities are limited ‘a lot’ by their symptoms⁴². This is a significant new burden of illness for the working age population.

⁴⁰ [Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England - The Health Foundation](#)

⁴¹ [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴² [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

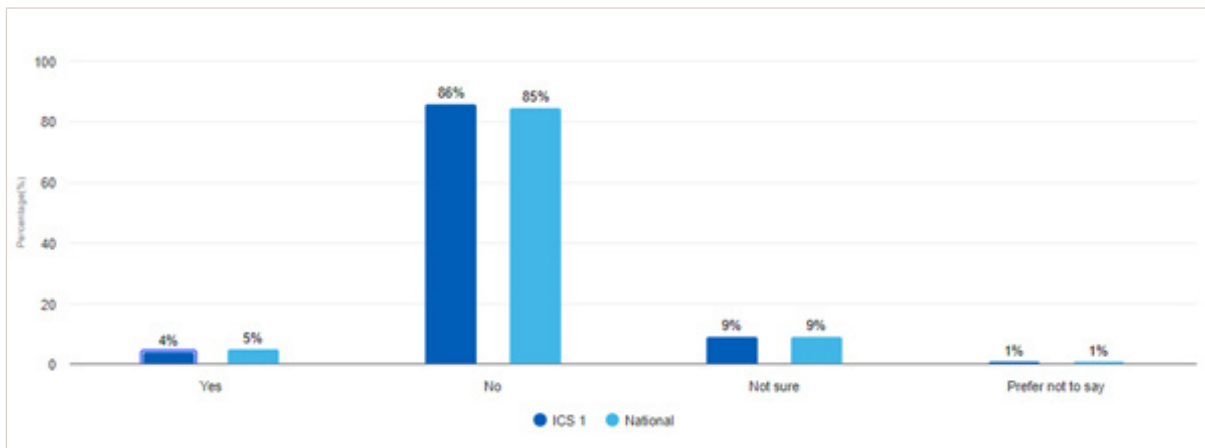


Figure 10 - Long Covid prevalence: patients registered with a GP in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICS and England (National), GP Patient Survey 2023⁴³

These populations experiencing ill health are the current workforce, and the workforce of the future. For everyone's benefit and for a stronger future workforce and a healthier city, workplaces have the opportunity to be supporting ill-health prevention initiatives, enabling healthy behaviours and helping those with ill health stay in the workforce.

Case study: The University of Southampton Mental Health Charter

As one of the first 32 universities to join the University Mental Health Charter Programme⁴⁴, in 2021, The University of Southampton has committed to promoting mental health and wellbeing, embedding a whole-university approach and improving the support available for both staff and students. The programme provides a framework to help universities in making mental health a university-wide priority, and shares learning and good practice through networks and events. Through a process of self-evaluation, peer assessment and onsite visits and input from Student Minds, the University will develop a comprehensive action plan, collaborating with staff and students across the organisation. As a result of the process, the University is aiming to achieve the programme's University Mental Health Charter Award.

Sickness absence, stress and autonomy

In 2019-21 Southampton had similar sickness absence rates to those in England: 1.5% of people had at least one day off sick in the previous week, and 0.7% of working days were lost to sickness absence⁴⁵. Nationally however, in 2022, the sickness absence rate (percentage of working hours lost due to sickness or injury) rose to 2.6%, the highest it has been since 2004⁴⁶. In the Southeast, the estimated total annual wage cost to all small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by days lost due to sickness absence in 2021 was £235.2M⁴⁷. According to a survey by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD), in 2022 the most common causes of

⁴³ [GP Patient Survey - Analysis Tool \(gp-patient.co.uk\)](https://gp-patient.co.uk/)

⁴⁴ [32 Universities lead the way in demonstrating commitment to mental health in joining new University Mental Health Charter Programme - Student Minds](#)

⁴⁵ [Public health profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/)

⁴⁶ [Sickness absence in the UK labour market - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/)

⁴⁷ Small and Medium Enterprises Work and Health Report, OHID, July 2023 - [Microsoft Power BI](#)

long-term absence nationally were mental ill health (57%), musculoskeletal injuries (46%), stress (38%), acute medical conditions (e.g. stroke) (37%) and Long Covid (26%)⁴⁸.

In 2021-22, 1.8million workers suffered work-related ill health, of which 51% of cases were stress, anxiety or depression and 27% musculoskeletal disorders⁴⁹. In Southampton there is a large, estimated population prevalence of musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions (14.9%)⁵⁰, and those with chronic MSK conditions are over three times more likely to report poor health conditions than those without⁵¹.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data finds that sickness absence is not distributed equally, with higher sickness absence reported in women, older workers, workers with long-term conditions, part-time workers and people working in care, leisure, or other service occupations. The sickness absence rate for people with long-term conditions was 4.9% in 2022 and is at its highest point since 2008. ONS analysis also showed that sickness absence has increased for those with long-term conditions who are still working⁵².

Work-related stress and burn out is also increasing. Prior to the pandemic, the rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety was increasing, and the current rate of 2,750 per 100,000 workers (2021-22) is higher than pre-pandemic levels: in 2021-22, 17 million working days were lost as a result⁵³. Feeling overwhelmed and without control over how work is done adds to workplace stress and burn out. Creating roles that enable people to have control over their work and a sense of autonomy in decision-making contributes positively to staff wellbeing. Stress and unhappiness at work can sometimes also have an impact on other health issues, for example increased use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco. For people working in routine and manual occupations in Southampton, smoking is 1.6 times more prevalent than in the general adult population⁵⁴.

Case study: Employers working with Southampton Individual Placement and Support Service (IPS)

In 2022 the Southampton Individual Placement and Support Service (IPS) was awarded an Exemplary IPS quality mark for the work it does to help people gain sustainable employment who are referred from Southern Health's community mental health teams. Individuals may otherwise not be able to access the workforce or retain employment. Local employers involved in the scheme include Accor Invest, Oasis Community Learning, KL Utilities and Carnival UK. Employers have commented that they see the benefit of supporting local people into work and to remain in work. They also value the increasing diversity it brings to the workplace, the additional support from the IPS team and the opportunity to be more inclusive in recruitment practices.

"I was so taken back by the work the [IPS] team do and how beneficial it is to not only the people using the IPS service but also a great opportunity as an employer to recruit individuals who are looking at hospitality to support them during this stage in their lives"

Accor Invest employer

⁴⁸ [Health and wellbeing at work 2022: Survey report \(cipd.org\)](#)

⁴⁹ [Health and safety statistics 2022 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵⁰ [Musculoskeletal health: local profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

⁵¹ [Understanding the drivers of healthy life expectancy: report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵² [Half a million more people are out of the labour force because of long-term sickness - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵³ [Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2022 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵⁴ [Public health profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

The future

In the years to 2029, Southampton's population is expected to grow by 7.5%. The largest growth is expected to be in the over 65yrs group, but the proportion of the population of working age is expected to steadily decline⁵⁵. Coupled with a decreasing birth rate in Southampton and nationally, this change in demography in the near future is likely to impact on workforce productivity and skills, but may also have a specific impact on the availability of carers for an ageing population. This makes the need to focus on skills gaps and the retention of younger people even more important. Evolving workforce practice towards those currently unable to access or remain in the workforce, and inspiring young people to work in the city using good work principles, more flexibility and portfolio careers, could assist with this and work towards the joint goals of inclusive growth and improved health.

The vision for Southampton, as articulated by the local business community at a summit in January 2023, is to create an inclusive and diverse economy that invests in digital skills and low-carbon initiatives so that the city is ready to seize new opportunities and manage future challenges. Overall there is agreement that the future economy needs to be shaped to fit the needs of Southampton residents. To have any chance of success, this reshaping must include and prioritise health and wellbeing needs. Collaboration between businesses, residents and innovators is required, driven by strong leaders who are committed to the principles of good work and understand that there is no wealth without health.



⁵⁵ [Population change \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/population-change)

3. Opportunities for employers to benefit health and business

Locally, nationally and globally there is much debate and exploration taking place in many different arenas on how employers can contribute to improving local population health, and there is a wealth of resource available.

“Within public policy debates, a lot is said about raising aspirations of people entering the workforce. However, far less is said about raising the aspirations of the businesses that employ them.” [Good Work Project | Local Government Association](#)

The role of Anchor Institutions

There are five key ways in which anchor institutions can use their influence to positively impact health⁵⁶:

- a. Widen access to good work – widening recruitment practice locally, diversifying the workforce and offering fair pay and working conditions can improve workers’ health and boost productivity at the same time;
- b. Work closely with partners across a place – collaborating with others and influencing practice can accelerate progress towards shared social goals;
- c. Purchase locally and for social benefit – with significant purchasing power, anchor organisations can direct their resources to benefit local businesses, communities and the local economy;
- d. Use buildings and spaces to support communities – anchors’ estates can be put towards good use in supporting social, economic and environmental aims;
- e. Reduce environmental impact – large organisations can have a significantly detrimental impact on the local and global environment, but adopting sustainable practices can make an important difference.

These sit alongside any benefits that their core business, e.g. health or care, delivers for local residents.

The Good Work Charter

Adopting The Good Work Charter offers businesses many opportunities to benchmark their employment and skills model, and its supportive toolkit⁵⁷ is a comprehensive resource to consult. It sets out the national and international regulations, codes and guidance that underpin each element of the charter.

There are general principles businesses could consider to improve their employment practice and workplaces across the board and contribute to better workplace health and wellbeing.

⁵⁶ [Building healthier communities: the role of the NHS as an anchor institution - The Health Foundation](#)

⁵⁷ <https://www.ifow.org/toolkit/the-good-work-charter>

Access

Employers can review how wide the talent pool is from which the business recruits. Where needed, approaches can be varied and recruitment campaigns tailored. Direct engagement with local populations about recruitment will be helpful and barriers to inclusive recruitment and selection practices should be removed. Partnerships with local support schemes can be very beneficial, for example the SCC Employment Support Team and Solent Business and Skills Solutions. Accessing talent from diverse populations and incorporating perspectives from as wide a range of people as possible is beneficial for productivity and innovation and helps level inequality in employment as well as health. This includes supporting people with health conditions into work and to stay in work. The Everyone Economy⁵⁸ encourages inclusive participation in work to boost the economy as well as improve opportunities and income for individuals and previously-excluded groups.

Fair pay

A review of pay, especially of the organisation's lowest earners, could bring significant health benefit. Consideration could be given to implementing the Real Living Wage⁵⁹, a rate of pay that is independently calculated based on the cost of living and the income that is needed to meet essential needs. Fair pay is crucial to enable people to have decent living standards that support good health.

Fair conditions

Employers could review the way in which the workplace, contracts and working practices could better benefit employees. For example, is flexible working available, or working from home, and is there support to ensure a good work-life balance? Is better technological support needed? Flexible working arrangements can lead to more satisfied staff, and are particularly important for retaining staff with caring commitments outside work. Offering contracts with job security is also important for mental wellbeing.

Equality, dignity and autonomy

Roles need to be designed or reshaped to enable people to have more dignity and autonomy in their decisions and working life. Having a sense of control over how you work can increase motivation and help with mental wellbeing. Managers should be encouraged and supported to foster good relationships with staff, including developing psychological safety, dignity and feelings of trust and unity between colleagues. Principles of equality and inclusion should be properly embedded in every day practice and modelled by managers and leaders.

⁵⁸ [The Everyone Economy - CMI \(managers.org.uk\)](https://www.managers.org.uk/the-everyone-economy)

⁵⁹ [What is it? | Living Wage Foundation](https://www.livingwagefoundation.org.uk/what-is-it/)

Wellbeing

Workplace wellbeing programmes can help staff adopt healthier behaviours and support them if they become unwell. These programmes often combine employment support schemes and occupational health support with a number of staff benefits, campaigns and training that encourage healthier behaviour. For example:

- Mental health awareness in the workplace, encouragement to support colleagues' mental wellbeing, and Mental Health First Aiders⁶⁰;
- A network of staff wellbeing champions who promote campaigns and health messaging;
- Encouragement to move more whilst at work and take regular breaks;
- Healthier options available in staff canteens and corporate catering;
- Discounted fitness and active travel options e.g. a local gym or a cycle to work scheme⁶¹;
- In-house health checks or encouragement towards NHS Health Checks⁶² for those eligible;
- Information and support regarding:
 - o Alcohol, smoking and drugs;
 - o Workplace stress;
 - o Social connections/loneliness;
 - o Financial health.

Support

It is important that staff have access to workplace support within the organisation and from external sources too. This means staff having the freedom to associate and collectively bargain through professional associations and trade unions. Employers could consider awareness campaigns amongst staff, and partnerships with these types of organisations.

Participation

Employers should engage and consult with staff about the business and employment model, providing forums for discussion, meaningful involvement and co-production. Enabling participation, particularly for any decisions affecting staff themselves, can mean people feel a part of their organisations. It guards against feelings of disengagement and lack of motivation, and can improve mental wellbeing, and it can lead to innovative solutions and staff loyalty.

Learning

Employers should make sure that staff at every level can access the learning they need to do their job now and to develop in the future. As well as equipping staff with the skills and experience needed to carry out their job well, providing learning opportunities and progression can increase engagement and motivation in the workplace, and enable people to feel ambitious about the future.

⁶⁰ [E.g. Mental Health First Aid England – Mental Health At Work](#)

⁶¹ [Cycle to work scheme implementation guidance for employers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶² [NHS Health Check - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Workforce needs

Before any strategy is developed however it is crucial that employers understand their workforce needs. A workplace health needs assessment will help an organisation understand where they need to focus their efforts and track progress against workplace health objectives. Government advice is available to guide employers through this process⁶³, and recommends a staff survey that asks questions about general health and wellbeing, job satisfaction, and key behaviours including smoking, alcohol intake, sleep and physical activity. Collecting demographic information is also essential to ensure workplace policies and programmes are inclusive and accessible to diverse needs: not everyone has the same concerns and understanding about health and wellbeing, and so different types of support may need to be provided.

Information, advice and guidance

There is a wealth of resources available to employers to help embed good work in their organisations and improved workforce health and wellbeing. For a selection of resources see Appendix III.

Case Study: Ford UK Southampton Community Fund⁶⁴

Ford UK had a production plant in Southampton until 2013. Through the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Fund (HiWCF) an endowment from Ford UK enables grants of up to £6,000 to be awarded to community organisations in Southampton and Eastleigh to fund skills initiatives for local young people aged 11-25 years old. The aim of the scheme is to enable future workforce participation by encouraging skills building in young people who may have experienced barriers to learning.



⁶³ [Workplace health needs assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁶⁴ [Ford - Southampton Community Fund - HIWCF](#)

4. Recommendations

The key themes in this report have been largely focused on improving employment practice and conditions in order to raise overall population health outcomes in Southampton. Working conditions and workplace health support have the potential to significantly affect a large proportion of people living and working in the city in terms of their standards of daily living, their future health and the health of their families.

Bold recommendations are therefore needed to encourage and support employers to kick-start or enhance the work that many are already doing to support and improve the health of their staff. As a city we aspire to a workplace future where a culture of wellbeing is embedded, and the physical and mental health needs of employees are prioritised, protected and promoted, through fair, balanced and inclusive workplace conditions and policies.

As Director of Public Health, I call on employers to review and reshape their approach to workplace health and wellbeing. Businesses have been challenged and have taken action towards reaching the city's goal of NetZero carbon by 2030⁶⁵, and I would like to similarly challenge employers to act now and invest for health and for the city's economic future. The sooner we take action, the sooner we will achieve the city's vision of being a place where everyone can thrive.

I ask employers and business leaders to:

1. Actively maximise your impact across the five key areas of influence as anchor institutions in our city

- a. Widen access to good work
- b. Work closely with partners across a place
- c. Purchase locally and for social benefit
- d. Use buildings and spaces to support communities
- e. Reduce environmental impact

To have greatest impact I recommend that local anchor institutions:

- **Understand and strengthen your organisation's long-term position as a core influencer in the Southampton community.** Take stock of where you can increase your positive impact in the city as an employer, provider, purchaser and partner. It is through employers like you that the biggest impact can be made on workforce and population health now and into the future. ['How strong is your anchor? A Measurement Toolkit for Health Anchors'](#) is a useful resource.
- **Take part in and support local partnerships wherever possible.**
- **Utilise support and guidance** available for anchor institutions and share best practice within your sector. An example workforce programme for NHS anchors is Individual Placement and Support⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ [Southampton Net Zero Strategy](#)

⁶⁶ [E.g. About IPS - IPS Grow](#)

-
2. **Understand the health and social needs of your workforce and your business.** It is crucial that employers understand who their workforce is, where there may be gaps in the workforce and the support that staff need to maintain and improve their health. Who from our communities is not represented in your workforce, what could they bring to your business and what support and opportunity would help deliver this?
 3. **Adopt the principles of The Good Work Charter.** Using the wealth of resources available and local support schemes, become equipped to support your workforce's physical and mental health and wellbeing needs through an improved employment and skills offer.
 4. **Instil leadership that brings about a change in culture.** We should not only ensure that staff are protected from injury and getting unwell at work, but also that the way work is organised promotes good physical and mental health. Strong leadership is needed to generate change in norms around work so that staff health and wellbeing, both at work and at home, is seen as central to every part of the business and a corporate responsibility. A consistent and comprehensive campaign may be required, alongside staff and management training.
 5. **Level the playing field.** Pay special attention to the needs of those disproportionately impacted by unemployment or who find it difficult to remain in work. For example, policies and measures are needed that support previously unwell people back into work which don't require 100% fitness before returning. Graduated returns are so important to enable a successful outcome, but take time. Changing the culture may require a focus on reducing unconscious bias.
 6. **Take steps to address in-work poverty** by reviewing the salary and working hours of your lowest-paid workers in particular. Weigh up any increased costs of paying the Real Living Wage for example against productivity gains and reduced staff turnover.
 7. **Work locally in city-wide partnerships** towards skills planning and strategic leadership, through sharing information and evidence-based good practice. This should include measures to inspire and support under-represented communities and the next generation to achieve their potential, remain in the Southampton workforce and invest in their future health and the city's future prosperity.
 8. **Monitor and record the impact of your action.** This will enable you to see how far you have come, and the effect it is having on your staff and your business, as well as refocus or redirect efforts where needed.

I also recommend that business and skills planners:

- **Be ready to implement actions arising from the developing Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).** Recognising that demand/supply skills planning at a local level takes time it is crucial that steps are taken immediately the Plan is published. Forward planning is needed, using evidence-based approaches to build the workforce pipeline, support employment from the most deprived communities and help employers adapt and evolve into growth sectors.

Appendix I:

Progress on past recommendations

Collective action to reduce and mitigate the impact of health inequalities requires long-term commitment and sustained focus; in Southampton there have been good signs of progress since my last report was published in 2022.

This year's report focuses on one element of last year's recommendations in depth, celebrating success and proposing priorities for ongoing work. We have also seen positive action across the other recommendations that I made for our city.

The **priority and leadership** foundations are set. The Southampton Health and Wellbeing Board, Southampton Health and Care Partnership and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board and Partnership (HIOW ICP/ICB) have all committed to evidenced based, long-term action in this area. Boards have delivered development sessions and established partnerships, interest groups and communities of practice. This has allowed partners to come together rapidly to respond to specific emerging challenges, including the rising cost of living.

A **health in all policies** commitment has been made by the Health and Wellbeing Board, with a programme of work in train to focus on key opportunities to reduce health inequalities through programme-based developments, strategic joint action and processes that support decision making. Local momentum to improve the impact that **large organisations anchored in our city** have on our population's health and wellbeing has been seized by the HIOW ICP who have set this as a priority for their future delivery and assurance.

We continue to develop evidence-based action in Southampton across all **priority policy areas**: best start in life; maximising capability and control; fair employment and good work for all; a healthy standard of living for all; healthy and sustainable places and communities and strengthening ill-health prevention. Action to reduce healthcare inequalities continues, including a focus on our 20% most deprived, priority inclusion groups and outcomes relating to maternity, severe mental illness, chronic respiratory disease, early cancer diagnosis and hypertension. Areas where I see opportunity for even greater impact include the development of family hubs, improving the standard of living for all and strengthening the focus and investment in ill-health prevention in the NHS. We also need to renew our attention to understanding and learning from the impact of our work. There has also been additional progress incorporating a focus on sustainability, as recommended in Marmot's 2020 10 Years On review of progress.

Communities remain central to the ambitions that I outlined last year and, as we all face shared challenges across our city, we will only sustain progress if the **different relationship with communities** is continued. There has been good progress since my last report. Southampton City Council's Champions programme has been re-launched to build on the fantastic work achieved across communities during the COVID pandemic and the city's children and young people have chosen their priorities as a Child Friendly City, including a focus on health. We can do more to develop community-based research, learning from our COVID work and the participatory action research that has been delivered with young people through the Pathways to Health collaboration.

It will take time and sustained effort in the face of changing needs, challenges and opportunities for this work to translate into a fairer city with improved population health. It remains critical that we prioritise this work and it becomes part of the way that we work in the city, with collective oversight of the [indicators](#) to measure progress in core local priorities to reduce health inequalities that I shared last year.

Last year's recommendations:

1. Amplify the visibility of our leadership across agencies to celebrate, sustain and expand our local commitment to reducing health inequalities in all of our work. Ongoing strategic commitment and widespread organisational development will grow our impact on health inequalities. Specifically, our residents will benefit if we:
 - Champion and lead our workforce to develop a shared understanding of health inequalities and delivery of effective actions or interventions at scale.
 - Continue to advocate on behalf of our residents to bring influence to improve the wider determinants of health in our city, including poverty, often in the face of growing resident need.
2. Maximise the impact of our core business on the 'causes of the causes' of health, wellbeing and inequality. Systematically, our residents will benefit if we:
 - Apply a Health in All Policies approach in organisational, place and system level service delivery. This builds on the commitments and support from our Health and Wellbeing Board and Southampton City Full Council and will require widespread adoption and implementation of a systematic framework across our core work.
 - Grow momentum for our work to improve the impact that large organisations anchored within our city have. Initial areas of focus include workforce (including aspiration, employment, good quality work and workforce wellbeing) and economic growth that benefits residents (including local procurement and focussed engagement with local business).
3. Continue to do what we know works. With growing inequalities and challenges faced by communities, we need to act quickly and effectively. We know what works. Specifically, residents will benefit if we:
 - Consider the impact on health inequalities when re-designing evidence-based practice across all six areas of the framework above. This includes targeted support around the healthy child programme and family hubs, action to improve educational attainment and delivery of effective preventative interventions (e.g. to reduce smoking rates) at scale across our core services.
 - Focus on ongoing development of an evidence and research informed approach across the areas of the framework, prioritising interventions that reduce inequalities and learning about what works in our local context with strong evaluation.
 - Review and continuously improve the equity of our work through established processes such as health equity audit and health impact assessment. Is our action designed in a way that is proportionate to need? Who benefits and who doesn't? Who has a good experience and who doesn't?

4. Commit to a new way of working with and alongside our communities - a different relationship is good for us all. For us to change the factors that drive health inequalities, we can work together in a very different way with explicit focus on assets, trust, relationships and power within our city. Specifically, residents will benefit if we:

- Learn from our COVID work and scale different ways of working with communities in our core business, including use of community-led research and community-centred approaches that may disrupt the status quo for the better.
- Develop the culture and ways of working required for us to work alongside residents, recognising the strength and power of our communities and nurturing assets.
- Give our children and young people increasing capacity to influence within our UNICEF Child Friendly City.

5. Harness and monitor the benefit of system working to improve health. Changes to the health and care system offer the opportunity to effectively scale prevention as core business, explicitly focus on proportionate and fair service access experience and outcome. Specifically, our residents will benefit if we:

- Continue to put health equity at the core of our local strategies in the city and beyond.
- Include indicators relating to inequalities and the wider determinants of health within assurance of our work. It will take time to make a difference but, with the right measures along the way, we can keep check of our impact on the conditions that are driving health, wellbeing and inequality.
- Act collectively where this harnesses greater impact and momentum to improve health equity. This includes: our work to improve employment or workplace determinants of health; our role in supporting economic growth that benefits residents; and our delivery of preventative interventions at scale (e.g. tobacco).
- Work with communities, even when delivering at scale or wide geography, to support equitable access, experience, and outcome from services. We have strong local academic partners who can support and have seen the value of community-led research alongside more traditional models for engagement.

Appendix II: Data on Southampton Good Work Principles

Access to employment

Southampton remains a major area for employment opportunities. The unemployment rate is declining, down from 6.2% in December 2021 to 4.5% in December 2022. The employment rate as of December 2022 was 76.1%, similar to the national (75.8%) and Southeast (78.1%) averages (see Figure 11). However, local changes in employment rate have not been statistically significant in recent years⁶⁷.

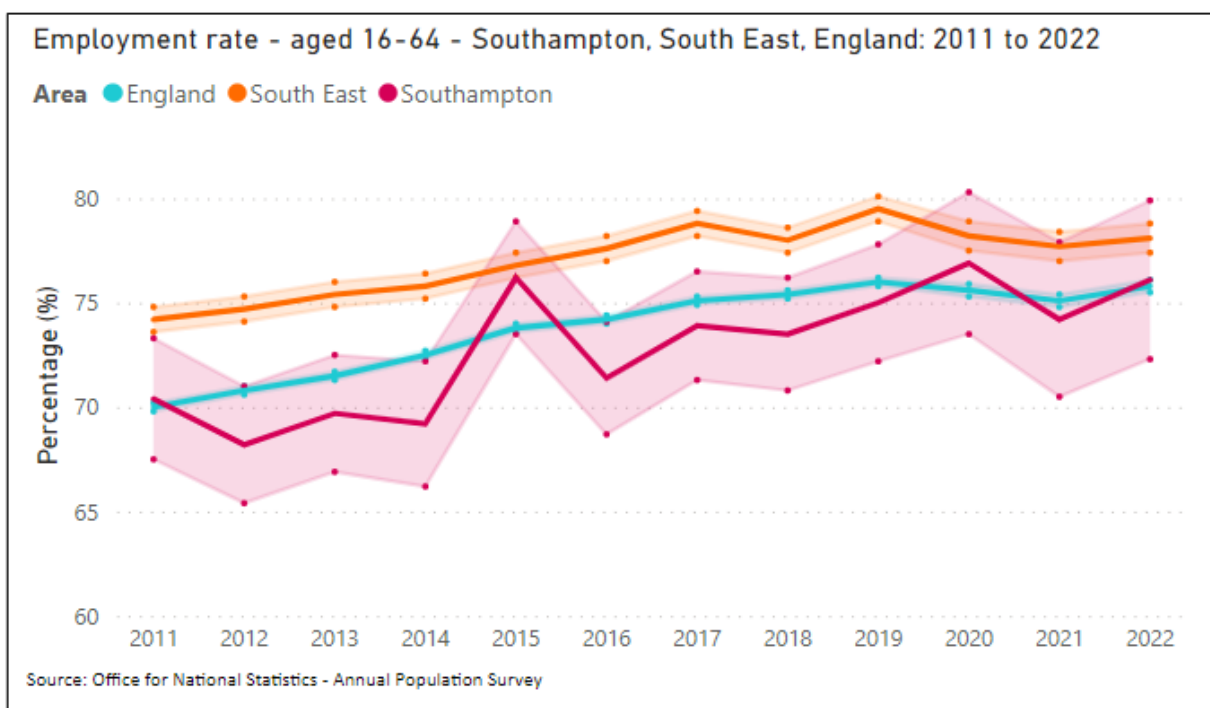


Figure 11 - Southampton, South East and England employment rate (aged 16-64), 2011-2022

In 2022, 79.6% of the Southampton working age population was economically active, which is similar to England (78.7%) and the Southeast (80.7%). This is an increase in Southampton of 0.5% compared to declines of -0.2% (England) and -0.1% (Southeast).

Long-term illness is a significant, and increasingly common, reason for economic inactivity (people aged 16-64 who are not working or seeking work). In Southampton, 22.7% of economically inactive people are inactive due to long-term illness.

Office for National Statistics analysis shows that the proportion of inactive people who are inactive due to long term sickness increased to a record high in April 2023 of 29.3%⁶⁸, and that half a million more people are out of the workforce due to long-term sickness than in 2019 (see Figure 12). If ill-health is a barrier to our local residents entering the workforce and having access to good jobs and fair employment that can benefit health, we have a widespread interest across local organisations in supporting good health and wellbeing for our local working age population.

⁶⁷ All references to economic indicators are from [Economic assessment \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/economic-assessment) unless otherwise stated

⁶⁸ [Labour market overview, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/labour-market-overview)

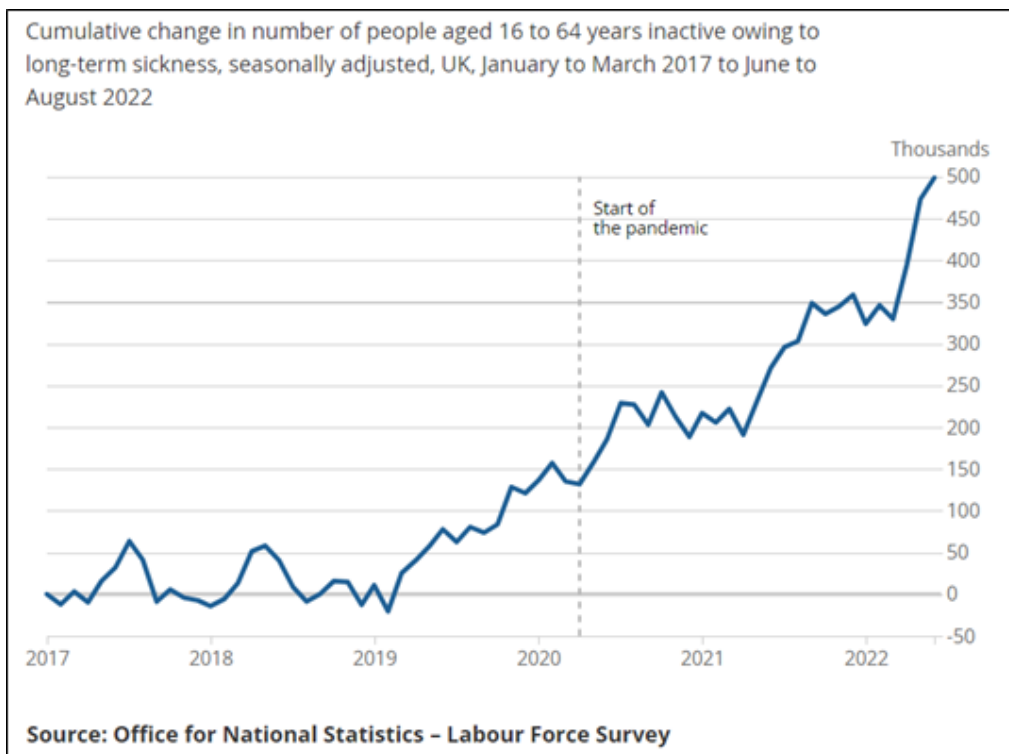


Figure 12 - Number of people aged 16-64yrs inactive due to long-term sickness, UK, Office for National Statistics

Older people form the majority of those economically inactive due to long term sickness. Worryingly however, inactivity due to long term illness rose faster in younger people (16-34yrs)⁶⁹. In Southampton, the percentage of people economically inactive due to long-term sickness looks to have increased in 2022, but this is not statistically significant (Figure 13). There is debate about whether or not poor health is driving the rise in economic inactivity nationally, but whatever explains the true picture, rising rates of poor physical and mental health are likely to be an important factor in economic inactivity.

⁶⁹ [Half a million more people are out of the labour force because of long-term sickness - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandwork/employmentandlabourmarket/otherlabourmarketissues/economicinactivity/bulletins/economicinactivityintheuk/2022-07-27)

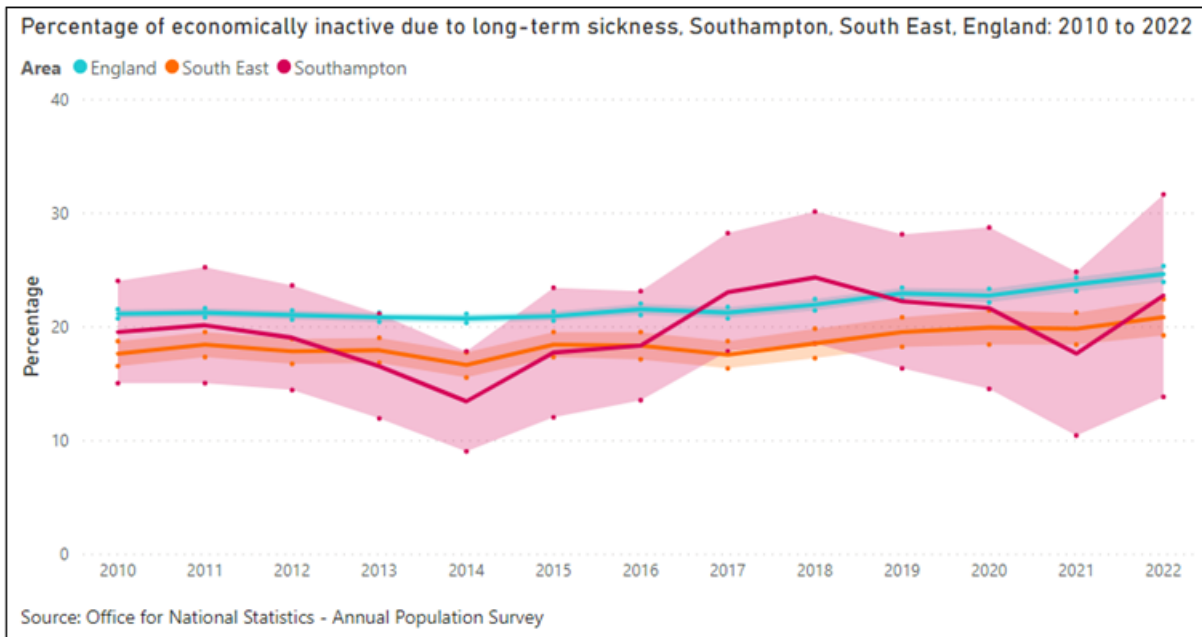


Figure 13 - Percentage of people economically inactive due to long-term sickness, 2010-2022

Employment and unemployment is not evenly distributed of course. Females and people from ethnic minority groups traditionally show lower (but not significantly lower) rates of employment in Southampton than males and white UK-born individuals respectively. In May 2023, there was a 5.1 percentage point difference between unemployment in the most compared to the least deprived neighbourhoods in Southampton. In Southampton (2021), 6.0% of 16-17 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This is significantly higher than the England average (4.7%) and has been since 2018.

Those with core or work-limiting disability under the Equality Act have consistently experienced significantly lower employment rates in Southampton than those not considered disabled, apart from in 2021. This may have been a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, when employment rates for those with disabilities increased in 2020 and 2021. The gap re-emerged in 2022: those without a disability in Southampton have an employment rate of 83.7% compared to 56.0% in those with a disability (see Figure 14).

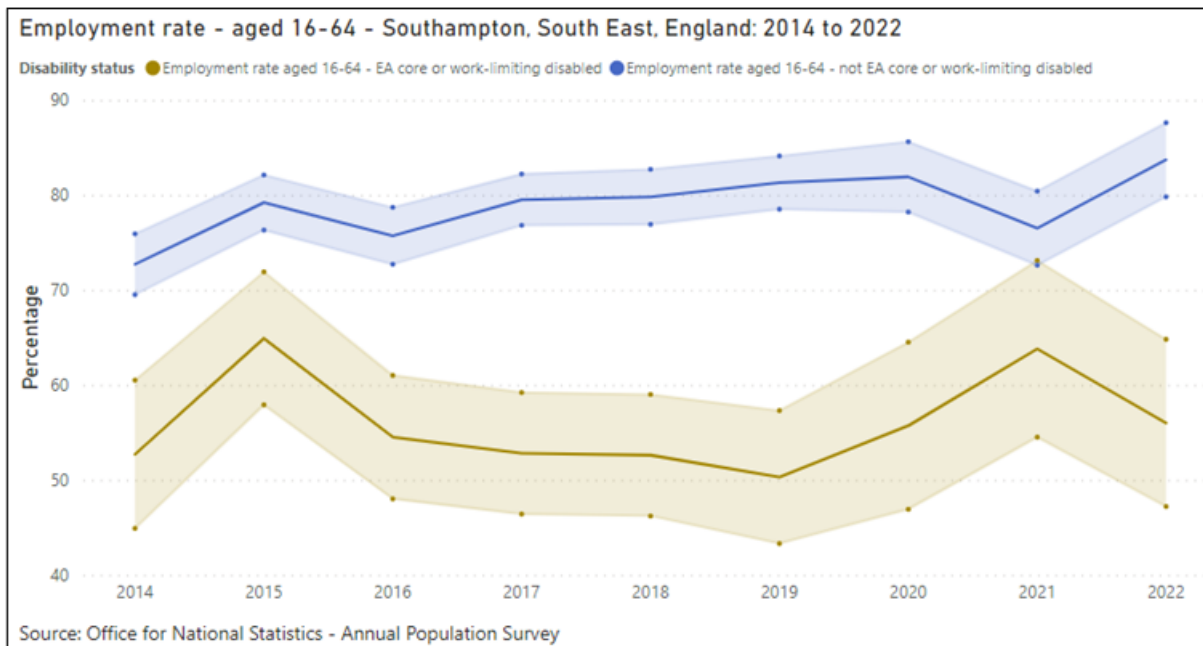


Figure 14 - Southampton employment rate (aged 16-64), disabled and not disabled

Employment rates are lower in Southampton, but not significantly lower, for those with health conditions. Those with difficulty seeing or hearing consistently see the lowest rate of employment (26.4% in 2022, but note small sample size) – see Figure 15 below. Similar patterns are seen nationally.

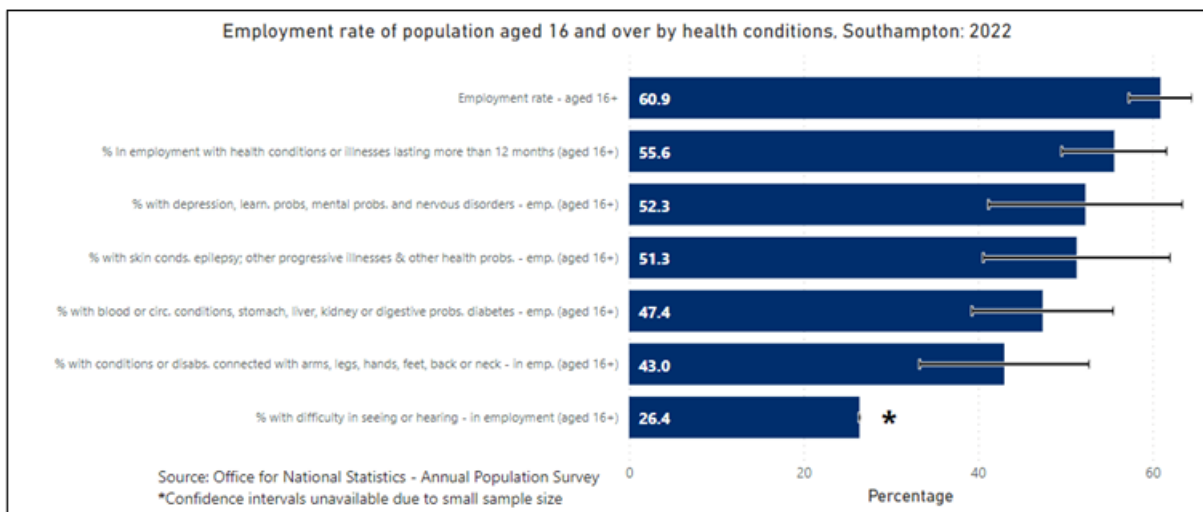


Figure 15 - Southampton employment rate by health conditions

There is also the impact of caring responsibilities on the workplace and the labour market. In Southampton, 7.7% of residents provide unpaid care in some form, with 2.4% providing 50hrs or more unpaid care per week⁷⁰. Providing such large amounts of care prevents participation in the paid workforce, and if carers are also employed it can mean disruption to working hours and

⁷⁰ Census dashboard, Southampton [Microsoft Power BI](#)

an impact on productivity, and worry for the carer about how to manage all their responsibilities. The high cost of childcare can also be a barrier preventing people returning to work.

The number of people claiming out of work benefits is declining. 4.2% (6,995) of the working age population in Southampton were claiming out of work benefits in August 2023, a decline of 5,005 (41.7%) since April 2021 when it was 7.1%. However, claimant count has not yet returned to its pre-pandemic baseline, and it also appears to have stagnated in recent months, possibly a result of recent financial pressures and economic uncertainty. Males consistently make up a greater proportion of claimants, having made up 57.8% of claimants in August 2023.

In summary, although unemployment has reduced and economic activity has increased in recent years, there are still causes for concern that need to be addressed to improve workforce participation and population health. Inactivity due to sickness has been rising, and there is clear inequity in workforce participation. There is a strong correlation between higher healthy life expectancy and higher employment rates, especially for males⁷¹ (see Figure 6, p25) and it is crucial that Southampton's labour market adapts strategies to widen access to work if lives are not to be lived longer in poor health.

Pay and income

In a Southampton City Council Cost of Living survey in January 2023⁷² 34% of respondents described their household finances as 'difficult' or 'very difficult'. Compared with 31% of people nationally, 55% of Southampton respondents said they would not be able to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850. 74% of respondents also said they were currently not able to build up any savings, and the responses of 41% of respondents indicated that they were food insecure.

There is a differential in Southampton pay between those working in the city and those who are resident. In 2022, the median gross weekly pay for full-time workers was £680, compared to £643 for residents; a difference of £37, the second largest gap amongst comparator cities. Workplace weekly pay in Southampton is higher but not significantly than the national average (£646), whilst resident pay is lower but not significantly so.

In 2022, the full time resident weekly gender pay gap was 14.6% (£99) in Southampton, this compares to a gap of £106 (15.3%) nationally. The full-time workplace gender weekly pay gap in Southampton was similar at 13.0% (£94) in 2022. However, there is no evidence that the gap is narrowing, for workplace or resident pay.

Increasing income is associated with improvements in health, and people with lower income are more likely to be living in poor health (see Figure 7, p27). A minimum income is needed to enable the basics of a healthy life to be affordable, and the Real Living Wage⁷³ is a rate of pay that is independently calculated based on the things people need to be able to live. According to data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in 2022 approximately two thirds of adults of working age who live in poverty live in a household where at least one adult is employed⁷⁴. It is crucial that pay gaps are addressed and that rates of pay and income are set at a fair level to enable everyone to live a healthy life.

⁷¹ [Employment and unemployment \(health.org.uk\)](https://www.health.org.uk/news/articles-and-opinions/employment-and-unemployment)

⁷² [Cost of living survey \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-survey)

⁷³ [What is it? | Living Wage Foundation](https://www.livingwagefoundation.org.uk/what-is-it/)

⁷⁴ [Working age poverty: Working households and individuals | JRF](https://www.jrf.org.uk/working-age-poverty-working-households-and-individuals)

Skills and learning

In Southampton, there is a suggestion that the level of qualification among Southampton residents is improving, particularly over the last two years. The proportion of the population qualified to NVQ Level 4 (degree level) or above has increased overall since 2015, to 47.9% in 2021. This is similar to national and regional levels and could suggest there is improved graduate retention in the city. However, 11.9% of Southampton's economically active population have either no or low qualifications (NVQ Level 1 or below), an increase compared to the previous year (10.9% in 2020).

The two universities in Southampton are valuable assets in terms of employment, improving workforce skills and supporting knowledge-based industries in the city. Latest data from 2019 found that 66% of establishments in Southampton had provided training for staff in the last year which is higher than England (61%), demonstrating a commitment to investment in staff⁷⁵.

To support healthier lives and protect from disadvantage in later life, the ability to access learning and skills is crucial. Like work, education and skills is a public health issue. Those with reduced opportunities to gain qualifications or acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills need particular support to be able to access work and progress to a healthier future. The available support mechanisms can achieve good results provided those that need them most are enabled to access them.



⁷⁵ [Economic assessment \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/economic-assessment)

Appendix III:

Advice and guidance for employers

- Resources for local anchor organisations
 - [What is an anchor institution? | CLES](#)
 - [How strong is your anchor? — Health Anchors Learning Network \(haln.org.uk\)](#)
 - [Building healthier communities: the role of the NHS as an anchor institution.pdf](#)
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) standards:
 - [Overview | Healthy workplaces: improving employee mental and physical health and wellbeing | Quality standards | NICE](#)
 - [Overview | Mental wellbeing at work | Guidance | NICE](#)
 - [Overview | Workplace health: management practices | Guidance | NICE](#)
 - [Overview | Physical activity in the workplace | Guidance | NICE](#)
- Chartered Institute for Personnel Development Good Work Index 2023: summary report and good practice guidance [CIPD Good Work Index 2023: Summary report](#)
- Trace Union Congress: In Sickness and in Health? Good work – and how to achieve it [goodwork.pdf \(tuc.org.uk\)](#)
- Business in the Community – Workwell Self-assessment tool and Workwell Commitment [Health and Wellbeing - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#) and Health and Wellbeing Toolkits [BITC/Public Health England: Health and Wellbeing Toolkits - Business in the Community](#)
- An independent body, supported by University of East Anglia, offering free courses on workplace health - [Home - evolworkplacewellbeing.org](#)
- Federation of Small Businesses Health and Wellbeing advice [Mental health and wellbeing support for small businesses | FSB | FSB, The Federation of Small Businesses](#)
- A 'roadmap' to improving mental health at work [The Mental Health at Work Commitment – Mental Health At Work](#)
- Government guidance on employing disabled people and people with health conditions [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Investigating health needs
 - [Work Health Index: benchmark and develop your employee health offer | CBI](#)
 - [Workplace health needs assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Southampton employers can also access the invaluable local support available from:

- SCC Employment support team [Employment support team \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#)
- Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Partnership [Homepage - The Apprenticeship & Skills Partnership \(theapprenticeshiphub.com\)](#)
- Solent Local Enterprise Partnership [Solent LEP - Local Enterprise Partnership - Solent LEP](#)