

State of the Borough Report – Summary

Reading's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

2025

Introduction

- A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a process through which we assess the current and future health, care and wellbeing needs of the local population to inform and guide the planning and commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services within a local authority area.
- A JSNA is:
 - Joint – owned by, and for the benefit of, all Health and Wellbeing Board partners
 - Strategic – high level, identifying the key priorities for an area
 - Needs Assessment – it outlines the health and wellbeing needs of residents
- The current Reading JSNA is not a single product, but a range of resources hosted on the [Reading Observatory](#).
- A recent Local Government Association review of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board identified the desire to focus on a small number of priorities.
- To support this process, this rapid JSNA has been produced using data and intelligence that is readily available. It is a concise and not exhaustive report, aimed at being a starting point for conversations.
- This JSNA doesn't include any mapping of assets, services that already exist to meet need, or experiences of service users or service providers.

Population and Demography



Total population – **182,907** (2024).



Population **increased 11.9%** between 2011 and 2021 – the largest increase was in **over-65s**, at 17.6%.



1.1% projected **population growth** from 2025 to 2040, driven by a **28.0%** increase in **over-65s** (which equates to around 6,300 older people).



45.0% of people are from **ethnic minority** groups (2021 Census).



1.6% of adults 16+ identified themselves as **gay or lesbian** (2,296 people), **2.0%** identified themselves as **bisexual** (2,791 people) (2021 Census).



General fertility rate fell by 27.9% over the last decade – more than the fall seen in the South East (19.6%) and England (20.3%).



1,163 people **died from all causes** in 2023.

Accurate estimates of the **current and projected future number of residents and their characteristics** are fundamental to anticipating the scale of need for services. Here we outline the essential facts of Reading's population.

Building Blocks of Life



15,805 Reading residents (9.0% of the population) live in areas that are among the 20% **most deprived** in England.



17.0% of children **under the age of 16** are living in **poverty** (2023/24); **10.4%** of households are experiencing **fuel poverty** (2023).



Nearly half of Reading households (48.1%) **live in rented accommodation** (2021 Census).



11.1% of assessed properties have the **lowest energy efficiency ratings** (bands E, F and G) (2023/24).



Crime rates for possession of weapons, robbery, shoplifting, theft from the person, and anti-social behaviour **increased** between June 2023 and April 2025.



Rates of fast food outlets, premises licenced to sell alcohol, and gambling premises are **higher** than the South East and England.



11.1% of people are living in areas at the **highest risk of food insecurity** (2022).



5.3% of deaths among adults aged 30 and over in 2023 were attributable to **air pollution** (fine particulate matter).

Healthcare services are important, but the building blocks of life – the **built and natural environment, communities, social institutions and infrastructure** – are just as important, if not more so, for creating the conditions for living healthy lives.

Start Well



35.1% of babies were **not breastfed** at 6-8 weeks old (2023/24).



The **infant mortality rate** ranks Reading the **third highest** compared to its 15 nearest statistical neighbours in 2021/23.



Majority of childhood immunisations were **below the national minimum target** in 2023/24.



1 in 3 pupils did not achieve a **good level of development** by the end of Reception; **4 out of 10** pupils in Year 6 **did not meet the expected standard** in reading, writing and maths (2023/24).



32.9% of five year olds suffered from **tooth decay** in 2021/22.



21.9% of Reception pupils and **36.7%** of Year 6 pupils were **overweight or obese** in 2023/24.



3.3% of primary school pupils and **3.2%** of secondary school pupils **had social, emotional mental health needs** (2022/23).



Rates of children in need, children on Child Protection Plans and children with special educational needs are **higher** than the South East and England.



1 in 3 pupils failed to achieve a grade 4 or above (a 'standard' pass) in their English and Mathematics GCSEs (2023/24).

The evidence is clear – the period of life from **conception to early adulthood** is crucial for an individual's health and wellbeing. The presence of disease or risk factors during this time can affect the rest of a person's life – and early preventative interventions can lead to benefits that accumulate over time.

Live Well



Life expectancy for males and females is **below** the South East average, and **inequality in female life expectancy is increasing** (2021-23).



Males spend **19.3%** of their **lives in poor health** compared with **21.9%** for females (2021-23).



1,295 premature deaths under the age of 75 (2021-23).



Hypertension (12.0%), depression (10.9%), and diabetes (5.7%) were the **three highest long term conditions** in 2025.



61.6% of adults 18+ are **overweight or obese**; **19.6%** of adults 16+ are **physically inactive**; **28.7%** of adults 16+ **eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables** a day (2023/24).



New cases of **depression diagnoses** have **doubled** since 2013/14.



Rate of new sexually transmitted infections was **higher** than the South East in 2024.



Cancer screening for bowel, breast and cervical cancer is **lower** than the South East and England.

The freedoms of adult life give opportunities for **careers, child-raising, community activities and social life**, but all of these have **associated risks to health**. Behaviours and experiences sustained over a long period can have a significant effect on the risk of developing long term conditions, and premature death.

Age Well



People aged 65 years and over had an average of **4.2 long term conditions** (2025).



Life expectancy at age 65 for males and females is **lower** than the South East (2021-23).



A gap of **6.9 years** in life expectancy at age 65 between males living the **most and least deprived** areas, for females, the gap was **6.8 years** in 2021-23.



Males spent **40.9%** of their lives after the age of 65 **in poor health**, for females, it was **40.4%** (2021-23).



Over half (54.5%) of people aged 65 and over had **hypertension** (2025), putting them at higher risk of heart disease and stroke.



By 2035, it is estimated that **18,600** people aged 65+ will suffer from **2 or more health conditions**, **4,700** will suffer from **4 or more**.



54.4% of **adult social care users** aged 65+ and **78.7%** of **adult carers** did not have as much **social contact** as they would have liked (2023/24).

Age is the **biggest risk factor for most causes of death and disease**, and delaying and managing age-related decline is an important area of focus.