

MP raises life expectancy issue

Variations in life expectancy across the city have been put on the Government's agenda by Mark Lancaster.

Mr Lancaster raised the issue as health secretary Andrew Lansley unveiled a new approach to public health yesterday (Tuesday).

The Milton Keynes North MP highlighted that residents of some estates are likely to die 12 years earlier than those in other estates, branding the gap 'staggering'.

Mr Lansley said: "My honourable friend is absolutely right," stating that health screening, immunisation programmes and health visitors will help to tackle this discrepancy.

He added: "It will be for his local authorities and communities to get together to ask how they can address the inequalities. That will be vital to achieving health improvement in his community."

His White Paper, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, outlines how the onus of public health will be transferred to councils. It is the first time its budget has been protected since the 1800s.

Two centuries years ago this area of healthcare centred on infectious diseases and pollution. Now the dominant issues are smoking, obesity and mental illness.

In Milton Keynes, the number of children who are physically active is 'significantly worse' than the English average, according to the most recent Health Profile.

The NHS public health body calculated that in Milton Keynes there are 34,000 obese people, with over 2,000 being morbidly obese.

After the health secretary's statement, Mr Lancaster said: "It is shocking that people in Woughton are forecast to reach the age of 74, while those in Middleton are likely to live until they are 86. Strengthening public health is a way of addressing this gap. After all, prevention is so much better than cure. Transferring this responsibility to councils is yet another example of the Coalition's localist philosophy bringing benefits to Milton Keynes."