

Mark comments on new health report

A NEW report has revealed a 'mixed picture' of Milton Keynes's health, according to a city MP.

Mark Lancaster noted the contrasting findings of the latest Public Health Annual Report by NHS Milton Keynes, which shows that while life expectancy has increased, the gap between rich and poor has also widened.

The member for Milton Keynes North is particularly concerned that hip fracture rates remain the highest in the country and that there has been a rise in diagnoses of HIV/AIDS.

While encouraged by the fact that more people are quitting smoking, and by the fall in incidences of tuberculosis, Mr Lancaster noted with unease that a quarter of city adults are now classed as obese.

While life expectancy in the city has increased to 78.1 for men, the gap between life expectancy in the most affluent and deprived wards has increased. This means people in the Middleton ward are likely to live 11.8 years longer than those in Woughton.

Meanwhile he was saddened by the increase in 'public health burials' – 19 in 2009 – where the council must arrange funerals as the next of kin are absent, do not want to be involved or cannot afford it.

The report goes on to state: 'There remains marked health and social inequalities in Milton Keynes.'

Mr Lancaster, who made health his priority before the election, said: "While this is just a snapshot and figures don't give us the full picture, the report is very useful for the people to identify priorities. Thankfully the NHS budget has been ring-fenced but it is clear there are specific issues that need to be addressed. Over the coming months I will be pushing for action on eradicating these health inequalities."