

## **Government's Green Paper on Prevention**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion.

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the expected publication of a Green Paper on prevention.

#### **Recommendation**

That the LGA Leadership Board discuss and note the update in the report regarding the expected publication on the Government's Green Paper on Prevention.

#### **Actions**

Officers to incorporate Members' comments into their approach to influencing and responding to the Green Paper.

**Contact officer:** Paul Ogden  
**Position:** Senior Adviser, Public Health  
**Phone no:** 0207 664 3277  
**Email:** Paul.Ogden@local.gov.uk

## **Government's Green Paper on Prevention**

### **Background**

1. The publication of the Secretary of State's vision document, *Prevention is better than cure*, in 2018 signalled a very welcome and timely interest in increasing the priority given by government to the prevention of avoidable ill health. The expected publication of a Green Paper on prevention in 2019 provides a major opportunity to put into effect tangible policy actions to achieve the ambitions set out in the vision.
2. The vision document set out a new approach to;
  - 2.1. keeping people healthy, happy and treating their health problems quickly;
  - 2.2. empowering people to manage their own physical and mental health needs closer to home with the support of professionals in the community; and
  - 2.3. delivering care in the right place, in settings that suit them and their needs.
3. The document set out how we can use the power of local communities to support people with health issues and prevent worsening health.
4. As set out in the Government's Aging Society Grand Challenge launched earlier this year, it's the Government's aim for this country's population to enjoy, on average, five more years of healthy, independent living by 2035, while closing the gap between the richest and the poorest.
5. The LGA has said that means:
  - 5.1. Prioritising investment in primary and community healthcare;
  - 5.2. Making sure every child has the best start in life;
  - 5.3. Supporting local councils to take the lead in improving health locally through innovation, communication and community outreach;
  - 5.4. Coordinating transport, housing, education, the workplace and the environment – to improve our nation's health; and
  - 5.5. Involving employers, businesses, charities, the voluntary sector and local groups in creating safe, connected and healthy neighbourhoods and workplaces.

### **Issues**

6. The strongest determinants of our health are the social, economic, commercial and environmental conditions in which people live. Unless the wider determinants of health are addressed in the Green Paper, major improvements in prevention will be limited.

7. Therefore, while interventions to prevent specific diseases will rightly feature in the Green Paper, the LGA has repeatedly called for a focus on how the whole of government can be harnessed to improve the conditions that have the biggest impact on keeping people healthy.
8. To inform the government's prevention Green Paper, and building on previous discussions and consultations we would want to see the Green Paper address the following:
  - 8.1. Why a whole-government prevention strategy is critical;
  - 8.2. The role of government in creating the conditions that lead to good health;
  - 8.3. The need to prioritise long-term investments in health across government; and
  - 8.4. How to embed a prevention approach across government.
9. We propose to argue that the Government's Green Paper on Prevention must take the opportunity to put real funding back into preventative services for children and adults, recognising that the most effective support to give children the best start in life, keep people of all ages well and enable communities and those who live in them to be safe and to thrive can only be delivered through and with local government. A great deal of evidence suggests that over time the costs of failing to provide that support outweigh by far the costs of keeping appropriate support in place – and the growing debate about knife crime being linked to cuts in youth services illustrates one aspect of that argument.
10. Analysis of local government spending shows that on top of large reductions in spending on areas vital for creating healthy places, there has been a dramatic shift away from preventative spend to spending on crisis management services, partly reflecting the legal duties facing statutory services. This is demonstrated most starkly for children's services. There has been a similar shift away from investment in preventative public health services and towards health care within the health system.
11. Moreover, current spending plans for future years appear set to tip the balance further away from prevention and investment in good health. For example, plans for NHS spend to make up an ever-greater share of government expenditure puts pressures on areas, such as education, that are vital for long-term health. At a local level, growing spend on social care is likely to have a similar impact on local health-creating services.

#### Local government delivers

12. The transfer of public health responsibilities to local government from the NHS under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 was one of the largest shifts in responsibilities from national to local government in decades.
13. The evidence shows that local government has been successful in delivering services under difficult circumstances and has prioritised increasingly scarce resources effectively, as well as innovated. Councils have also increased the level of transparency about how public health monies are spent, and the sector has been challenged, rightly by those that access our services.

#### A whole-government prevention strategy is critical

14. Maintaining and improving people's health throughout their lives is not a niche interest but central to the role of government. Poor health has a wide-ranging impact on individuals' wellbeing, the fabric of communities and society, the economy (especially productivity and workforce supply), and the affordability of public services. A prevention strategy that genuinely improves the health of the nation will, therefore, have far-reaching social and economic benefits. More than that, it will ensure that the government meets one of its core responsibilities: enabling all its citizens to enhance their opportunities for development.

#### The role of local and central government in creating the conditions that lead to good health

15. Social, economic, commercial and environmental conditions are the strongest determinants of people's health. Therefore, a real shift towards prevention cannot be delivered purely or even primarily by the health and care system or through focusing on individual responsibility. It requires organised efforts across all sectors, with government taking a lead.
16. An effective prevention strategy must work across the whole public sector. Departments across central government have necessary and important roles to play in creating the right national conditions for good health and preventing avoidable ill health. Many of the most important levers for creating healthy living conditions, however, sit at local level, so the role of place-based approaches led by local government need to be at the heart of the government strategy on prevention.

#### Embed a prevention approach across government

17. A genuine shift in government priorities towards prevention not only requires specific policy actions and investment in the right areas, but also strategies that embed a prevention approach across government and beyond. The role of place-based approaches to prevention led by local government should be at the heart of the prevention strategy. To create the conditions for locally-led approaches, it is vital to involve communities in decision-making and action.



**Local Government Association**  
**Company Number 11177145**

**LGA Leadership Board**  
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**Implications for Wales**

18. None.

**Financial Implications**

19. None.

**Next steps**

20. Officers to incorporate Members comments into their approach.