

Motion: Public Health

Councillor David Jenkins, Chairman Health Committee, Cambridgeshire County Council supported by Councillor Colette Wyatt-Lowe, Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Health, Hertfordshire County Council

Proposes that:

“This Association recognises the beneficial impact that Public Health and other ‘prevention’ activities have on long term outcomes including: reduced health and social care costs, improved individual quality of life and increased workforce productivity. We also recognise the work of Health and Wellbeing Boards and their importance in embedding Public Health measures.

Whilst we recognise the excellent work being done at present to maintain and improve such outcomes, this Association has expressed concern that reductions to the public health budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18 will have a significant impact on the essential prevention and health protection services provided by councils.

There is a case to be made that public health spend has historically been too low to achieve a significant and sustained positive impact on health outcomes and on health inequalities. Looking forward it will be important to ensure that the total resources available for public health are sufficient to meet needs. Councils in some areas have serious and well-founded concerns that the future public health investment in their communities could fall well behind likely need.

We recognise that providing additional financial support is exceptionally challenging, especially given the financial pressures across the public sector. However, the alternative is that without resources specifically for primary and secondary prevention, there is a risk that we won’t see the radical step change required to reduce impacts on the NHS and adult social care.

The LGA in its paper ‘Prevention: A Shared Commitment’ has identified key pieces of evidence that highlight the cost effectiveness of prevention. Through a number of case studies it illustrates how £ 1 billion could be spent to generate benefits of £7.19 billion over a five year period.

This Association therefore:

Encourages councils to bring forward coherent projects as investments to enable such radical step changes; and

Calls upon Her Majesty’s Government to make available substantial grant funding to finance such projects.”

LGA Comment

The LGA unequivocally supports this important Motion and is fully committed to playing its part on behalf of all councils to make the strong financial case for further investment in prevention.

The LGA shares the commitment and the sense of urgency that we need to move from treating an ever-growing burden of sickness and long-term conditions to a place-based approach in which we work together to prevent ill-health and support people to maintain their own health.

Councils have worked in partnership with Central Government to ensure the smooth transition of public health from the NHS to local government and we are already seeing improvements in performance and value for money post-transition.

The Government is finding billions of pounds for the NHS over the next four years and to then take vital money away from the services which can be used to prevent illness and the need for treatment later down the line is a false economy.

We are concerned that the messages around prevention are not being heard sufficiently across Whitehall and particularly with Treasury officials. The case for investment is a strong one and yet the opportunities for prevention are being missed.

The LGA working with Public Health England (PHE) and Association Directors of Public Health (ADPH) will continue to lobby Whitehall, backed by evidence, to develop a genuinely long-term approach to the economics of prevention.

The LGA's Community Wellbeing Board will continue to work hard to secure the changes that are needed, backed by our LGA Executive and supported by our member authorities.