

Public health reform – summary

April 2018

Introduction

Scotland's current health challenges are complex and go far beyond the control of the NHS, combining an ageing population, enduring health inequalities, and changes in the pattern of disease. Tackling Scotland's health challenges requires a different way of working to create a culture for health in Scotland, supporting everybody to work together more effectively towards a shared vision for the public's health.

Vision for Scotland

The vision is for a Scotland where everybody thrives. The ambition is for Scotland to be a world leader in improving the public's health. Public health reform will create a culture for health in Scotland that recognises the social and economic issues that affect health and creates environments that drive, enable and sustain healthy behaviours in our communities, supporting individuals to take ownership of their own health where possible. The innovative use of knowledge, data and intelligence will be a key tool in achieving this.

The need for reform

Despite improvement over time, average life expectancy in Scotland remains significantly lower than in other countries of the UK and the rest of Western Europe. There are also marked differences between the most and least deprived areas of Scotland.

To improve the public's health and the long-term sustainability of Scotland's public services, organisations and communities will need to work together to shift their focus towards preventing ill health and working more effectively in partnership.

This will require a focus on delivering improvements in the public's health across Scotland and at local level on those issues that matter most to local communities.

The [Public Health Review](#) published in February 2016 described how public health can work more effectively to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce inequalities.

The public health reform programme will work with national and local government, the third sector, private sector and communities to create a culture for health in Scotland that supports more effective collaboration to improve the public's health.



Public Health Scotland

Creating a culture for health in Scotland will require effective leadership nationally and locally.

To support this, we will establish a public health body for Scotland, bringing together national public health information and intelligence, health protection and health improvement expertise and knowledge in a single body.

The new body will provide a clear vision and strong voice for the public's health in Scotland by 2019.

It will be accountable to Scottish Government and COSLA and will support, enable and provide challenge to the whole system of partners in the public, private and third sector to improve and protect the public's health.

Local partnership

If we are to create a culture for health in Scotland, it will be important to work with communities to develop local solutions to local public health challenges. This will require different ways of working across the public, private and third sector to tackle the wider social and economic issues that affect health and deliver services in different ways that support communities and individuals to manage their own health and sustain healthy behaviours.

The public health reform programme will focus on working with existing local partnership arrangements to strengthen collaborative working for health improvement, building capacity and support across Scotland to put the public's health at the heart of local decision making.

Get involved

The formation of Public Health Scotland with a strong evidence-based approach, the development of shared public health priorities for Scotland and effective local partnerships will be the foundation on which we deliver public health reform.

This will only be possible if we can continue to build support and consensus across Scotland to work differently and focus on making a real difference to Scotland's health. This will require effective leadership and commitment from national and local government, the NHS, third sector, private sector and within communities.

To get involved visit publichealthreform.scot, follow us @phrscot or send your comments and feedback to publichealthreform@gov.scot

Public health priorities for Scotland

Shared public health priorities for Scotland are being developed through a process of engagement. They will provide a focus for closer collaboration and a joined-up approach to improving the public's health.

Published in spring 2018, they will focus on preventing ill health and early intervention on public health issues that are likely to have the most significant impact on improving the public's health.

These will be priorities for the whole system and are not intended to reflect all of the activities of public health in Scotland, including incident management, protecting health or health and social care public health. These essential activities will continue and will be reflected in the activities of the new public health body.