

On the day briefing: the prevention green paper

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Office have published **Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s**, a green paper setting out the case for change in the way we approach prevention, identifying key drivers of ill health including deprivation, inequalities, health-related behaviours such as smoking and physical inactivity, and mental health difficulties. Health is shaped by the services we receive, the choices we make, the conditions in which we live and our genetics.

The green paper commits to an approach which takes health as an asset, and as a foundation of thriving communities and a strong economy. It commits to moving away from a culture in which we take for granted good health, only paying attention to it when we experience health problems that we expect the NHS to fix. The green paper is accompanied by a consultation inviting views on the proposals and further measures to support prevention, and will be open for submissions until **14 October 2019**. NHS Providers will canvass views from our membership and submit a response.

Summary of key points

- The green paper sets out a vision for prevention in which health is treated as an asset, and the population empowered to 'co-create' their own health. Many of the measures announced focus on personalisation, and addressing inequalities between the most and least deprived members of the population.
- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will support prevention by embedding genomics in healthcare, expanding and modernising screening programmes, and taking a predictive approach to prevention to identify risks before they manifest in a personalised way.
- The NHS Long Term Plan has a key role to play in the wider approach to prevention, with measures such as expanding the diabetes prevention programme, introducing social prescribing and establishing alcohol care teams and support to stop smoking. There will be further support and advice for people to stay active including into old age.
- The green paper sets out ambitions to address the causes of ill health, and announces a 2030 smoke-free goal, action on childhood obesity, measures to improve food labelling, encouraging industry to reformulate foods and exploration of further levies on high sugar foods.
- The green paper addresses mental health as a key pillar of good health, and introduces a range of measures to support mental health in health services and schools, including a duty for schools to teach about mental health and campaigns to increase awareness of mental health.

- The government will explore ways of supporting the wider determinants of health, including supporting local authorities to incorporate health into planning of places and services, and improve access to green spaces.

Digital opportunities for prevention

The green paper sets out a number of actions related to technology and the use of data to better predict health problems and address them early, through 'intelligent public health' and precision medicine, focused support and advice for those at greatest risk, and identifying current and future threats to health.

- The green paper sets out actions for Public Health England (PHE) to take in partnership with NHSX and other partners to build a portfolio of innovative projects. Through the partnership PHE and NHSX will build trust with the public about use of their health data, refine an approach to analysis and insight to identify those at risk, and develop exemplar projects to establish an evidence base for personalised prevention.
- The green paper describes vision for screening in the NHS comprised of the following principles:
 - Maximising uptake, by making screening easier to access and reducing variation in take-up
 - Stratify risk in existing national screening programmes so that they are more personalised and focus interventions where they was most needed
 - Focused screening within high risk populations offered for a greater range of conditions, for example exploring introducing lung cancer screening for smokers
 - Better use of technology such as expanding the genomics offer, better use of data and embedding the use of artificial intelligence in the health system
 - Faster implementation of recommended interventions and programmes with clear accountability for delivery and investment in IT
- The NHS health check programme will be reviewed in order to ensure that risks are more consistently followed up and explore whether a more tailored service could maximise its benefits, including increasing uptake, identifying those most at risk, reviewing the range of services offered as part of the health check, and considering developing a digital service.
- Precision medicine, including the use of genomics to identify the correct care pathway according to an individual's risk factors and genetics, will be supported by a National Genomics Strategy published in autumn 2019. The green paper sets out an ambition for genomics to be embedded in routine healthcare, with 5 million genomic analyses carried out by 2023/24.
- The green paper commits to tackling the risk of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and the government has appointed Professor Dame Sally Davies as the UK special envoy on AMR to support a global effort against AMR, working with the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- A vaccination strategy, to be published by spring 2020, seeks to maintain and develop a world leading immunisation programme, and increase uptake of second dose MMR vaccines to at least 95%, via enhanced use of local immunisation coordinators and primary care networks and incorporating the

new and more cost-effective vaccines into the programme. The green paper also commits to tackling misinformation about vaccines.

- The government will develop and launch a composite health index, providing a top-level indicator of health tracked alongside the nation's GDP, measuring changes in health over time to assess the health impacts of wider policies.

Tackling risk factors

The green paper describes the biggest challenges that increase chances of developing health conditions that contribute to increased number of years lived with a disability, including smoking, diet, activity and mental health. It identifies that obesity contributes to 6.4% of years lived with disability (YLDs). It sets out a number of proposals aiming to reduce these risk factors.

Smoking

- With the aim of reducing smoking rates to 12% by 2022 and to zero by 2030, the green paper commits to an ultimatum for the tobacco industry to make smoke tobacco obsolete by 2030, with smokers either quitting or moving to reduced risk products like e-cigarettes. The green paper also commits to further measures discouraging people from starting to smoke in the first place, building on existing measures such as advertising bans and plain packaging.
- The green paper sets out an aim to use funds raised by options such as requiring tobacco companies to pay for the cost of tobacco control and related healthcare costs to focus stop smoking support on groups most in need, such as pregnant women, social renters, people in mental health wards, and those in deprived communities.

Obesity

- The green paper also explores options for reducing obesity rates, with only a third of adults currently at a healthy weight and obesity rates doubling since 1993. It identifies a need to make healthy choices easier, improving access to fruit and vegetables and discouraging excessive consumption of high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) foods.
- The green paper commits to exploring options for mandatory calories labelling in restaurants and cafes, and banning the promotions of HFSS foods by price and location in shops, as well as a 9pm watershed on TV advertising of such products.
- Five childhood obesity trailblazer authorities will have access to £1.5 million of funding and support over the next three years to test the potential for existing local levers to restrict out-of-home HFSS advertising, creating healthier food environments through the planning system, and incentivising businesses to improve their retail offer and improve accessibility and affordability of healthier foods.
- The government will commission an infant feeding survey to provide information on breastfeeding and assess the impact of actions on infant feeding, including challenging businesses to improve the nutritional content of commercially available baby food and drinks, and improving the labelling of infant food to enable parents to make informed decisions.

- In consideration of Brexit, the government will consult by the end of 2019 on how to build on the success of the current nutritional labelling scheme, considering the evidence underpinning the many forms of labelling and ensuring the UK continues to be world-leading in providing shoppers with the information they need to make healthy decisions while taking into account trade arrangements following departure from the EU.
- The green paper commits to reviewing the evidence of the impact of the soft drinks industry levy (SDIL) and considers extending it to sugary milk drinks as well.
- The green paper sets out an ambition to reduce salt intake from the current average of 8g per day to 7g by introducing salt reduction targets for industry to achieve by mid-2023 and influencing consumer behaviour both through marketing and via the NHS.
- The government will work with NHS England to develop approaches to improve the quality of brief advice given on weight management in general practice. It will also work with NHSE, PHE and NHSX to review the current digital weight management offer on the NHS Apps Library.

Physical activity

- The green paper identifies the positive impact of physical activity on mental and physical health, and sets out the aim of increasing people's physical activity levels in line with the recommended 150 plus minutes of aerobic activity per week. The government has also asked the UK Chief Medical Officers to review the current guidelines.
- The green paper commits to working with partners to launch a new 'digital design challenge' for strength and balance exercises to tackle the low levels of strength particularly among women. Participants will be asked to develop a free product or service to encourage people to do regular activities to increase their strength and balance.
- The green paper sets out actions to extend the national Moving Healthcare Professionals partnership supporting healthcare professionals to promote physical activity to their patients.
- A cross-government approach will be taken to encourage local authority planning decisions to promote active lifestyles, for more people to switch to public transport, cycling and walking, for nurseries to build physical activity into daily routines, and strengthen the evidence base for the social and economic value of physical activity.
- The government commits to supporting greater physical activity among the older population by encouraging activity among post-menopausal women, and supporting people to stay in work for longer.

Alcohol and drug use

- The 4% of the population made up of the heaviest drinkers account for 30% of all units of alcohol consumed. The highest risk of harm is concentrated among those in the lowest income bracket.
- The government will work with industry to increase the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products by 2025 and review the evidence for increasing the alcohol-free descriptor threshold from 0.05% ABV to 0.5%.

- DHSE will work with PHE, the Home Office and other partners to further develop policy around opioid use, and work with the Recovery Champion to develop a shared understanding of the current challenges facing the substance misuse treatment and recovery workforce, as well as developing an action plan for the treatment of heavy cannabis users, brief interventions for other cannabis users, and raising awareness of cannabis-related harm.

Mental health

The green paper reiterates the commitment made in the NHS Long Term plan to spend a further 2.3 billion a year on mental health services by 2023/24, treat a further 380,000 people a year with psychological therapies, and provide an additional 24,000 women a year with access to perinatal mental healthcare by 2023/24. The green paper sets out a commitment to close the prevention gap and achieve parity of esteem for mental health prevention, through a number of measures:

- The green paper acknowledges the need to lay the foundations for good mental health by taking urgent action to tackle the risk factors that can lead to poor mental health, such as adverse childhood events, violence, poverty, debt, housing insecurity, social isolation and bullying and discrimination. There is a need to invest in the protective factors such as safe and secure housing, strong attachments in childhood, and access to green spaces.
- DHSC commits to taking additional action on mental health, including:
 - Providing children and young people with advice to deal with difficult emotions and situations that lead to mental health problems, through the Rise Above programme.
 - Encouraging local authorities to put in place mental health promotion plans.
 - Investing up to 600,000 in sector-led improvements to support local authorities to strengthen their suicide prevention plans.
 - Providing £1 million to the Office for Students to run a competition to drive innovation in mental health support for students.
 - Launch an Every Mind Matters campaign in October 2019 to make 1 million adults better informed and equipped to look after their mental health, support others, and address mental health stigma.
- Wider government action will take place to support this work as follows:
 - Establish a statutory Breathing Space programme to provide respite to those with problem debt while they seek mental health support, by the end of the year.
 - Revise statutory guidance for schools to ensure they understand how mental health is embedded in existing requirements and ensure staff can identify and support children with mental health issues, with training for all new teachers in spotting the signs of mental health issues.
 - A requirement for schools to teach about mental health and wellbeing as part of sex and relationships education, with schools being encouraged to implement this by September 2019 and required to do so by September 2020.
 - The green paper identifies that the poorest areas of England have poorer health and less green space than wealthier areas. Nature-based interventions will be implemented through the 25 year environment plan and social prescribing.

Prevention in the NHS

Building on the commitments in the long term plan to double funding for the diabetes prevention programme, to offer NHS funded tobacco treatment and alcohol care teams in inpatient settings, and to set out goals for narrowing health inequalities, the green paper commits to actions which make the NHS a 'national wellness service', including:

- Allowing people to connect their own data into their health record if they choose
- Providing people with personalised advice based on aggregated data
- Giving people the tools and motivation to make informed choices
- Establish a Social Prescribing Academy to champion social prescribing and support national plans to make it available throughout England via 1,000 trained social prescribing link workers by 2020, and brokering relationships across health, local government, justice, arts, culture, sport, the outdoors and other sectors.
- Exploring further options to expand the role of community pharmacists through a Community Pharmacy contractual framework to redefine the integral role of community pharmacies in identifying and referring patients with health conditions, offer a wider range of advice and support.
- While local authorities will continue to commission public health services, the NHS and local authorities will be expected to work more closely together and embed prevention into the full range of health and other services. The green paper sets out an aim for collaborative commissioning to become the norm, requiring local authorities and the NHS to work closely together.
- Through Integrated Care Systems, public health services may be commissioned via a lead commissioner or pooled budgets. The green paper acknowledges that local areas need to decide what works best however they are encouraged to use the levers available to them to develop joint approaches and make best use of health and wellbeing boards.

Addressing the wider determinants of health

The green paper addresses the wider determinants of health including healthy places, early years and housing as key foundations upon which people build their health asset.

- The government will modernise the healthy child programme so that it is universal in reach and personalised in response, to enable focused services targeted at additional needs, and ensuring better links to health records, as well as improving support for perinatal mental health and the development of babies and young children. The government will consult on this separately.
- The government aims to improve childhood oral health and will consult on rolling out a school tooth brushing scheme, and explore ways of removing funding barriers to fluoridating tap water.
- The green paper restates the commitment to tackle knife crime and violence, enable social connection and tackle loneliness, and support the development of energy efficient, adaptable and accessible

homes for all generations, as well as encouraging local systems to 'put health into place', incorporating health into planning decisions.

- The government will improve public awareness about pollution, air quality and use surveillance and health data to evaluate long term trends in health associated with air quality.

NHS Providers view

Today Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, said:

"This is a welcome opportunity to recognise prevention and public health as a central pillar of a sustainable health and care system. Prevention is crucial in supporting the delivery of the ambitions of the NHS long term plan. We all have a role to play in ensuring people are living not only longer but healthier lives too. Trusts take their role in prevention and empowering people to manage their own health very seriously and are committed to delivering on the proposals set out in the long term plan.

"The proposals outlined in this green paper are a step in the right direction, but there is much more we must do. It is positive to see the prominent role accorded to mental health in the green paper and the drive to narrow inequalities in society. But much of this has been said before, and must now be backed up with action. One of the key determinants of the number of years lived in good health is level of deprivation, and without concerted and coordinated action to address the inequalities faced by those living in the most deprived communities, measures to support healthier lifestyles cannot meet their full potential.

"For this to be a serious and credible exercise, we must see a reverse to the deep cuts in council public health budgets, and budgets for wider local authority services, in recent years. We know there is a link between these cuts affecting local support services and the rise in demand for NHS care - this must be urgently addressed in the upcoming spending review.

"The NHS has a vital part to play, but the impact of this commitment to prevention depends not only on the efforts of NHS services to prevent but also a collaborative effort across government, local authorities and the wider system to address the wider determinants of health."