Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s – a summary

A summary to support responses to the green paper

July 2019

Open consultation

The Cabinet Office and Department of Health and Social Care are seeking views on proposals to help people live healthier, happier lives for longer.

The detailed commitments outlined in the green paper can be found online here (published July 2019). The open consultation to these proposals closes at 11:59pm on 14 October 2019. Responses can be submitted online here.

Healthy London Partnership has undertaken a rapid analysis to summarise the proposals to support responses from partners and colleagues.

In summary

The green paper announces that the coming decade will be a period of proactive, predictive, and personalised prevention that will require a new prevention model. At the core of this model is intelligent public health, which capitalises on the use of data held and collected by NHS allowing everyone access to their health information as well as more personalised health interventions.

The vision for prevention in the 2020s is one of participatory, rather than passive, health, where people are challenged and enabled with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to lead healthy lives. Ultimately, the paper argues that health is a shared responsibility, just as much as it is an opportunity.

Focusing on healthy life spans instead of life expectancy recognises that causes of death (cancer, heart disease and stroke) may not thoroughly capture the reasons behind people's ill health (joint, bone and muscle problems, depression and anxiety, long term conditions) and further sheds light on disproportionate effects of deprivation. The report, consequently, is organised along the factors that shape our health outcomes: services we receive, choices we make, conditions in which we live, and our genes.

Opportunities for intelligent public health

- A portfolio of innovative projects will be launched during phase one of the Predictive Prevention collaboration between PHE and NHS X, which hopes to better understand the needs of diverse groups and how data could best be used for prevention efforts;
- Focused health support and advice will be delivered through intelligent screening and health checks, also taking advantage of precision medicine to tailor treatments and assess genetic risk in healthy populations for research and prevention (National Genomics Healthcare Strategy to be published in autumn 2019);
- Support the UK's 5-year national action plan for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to contribute to a world where AMR is contained and controlled by 2040, and launch a Vaccination Strategy by spring 2020.

Proposals to tackle the biggest challenges

- Announcing a smoke-free 2030 ambition to be achieved by discouraging people from starting and supporting smokers to quit, while recognising groups at particular risk;
- Maintaining a healthy weight (publishing chapter 3 of the Childhood Obesity Strategy) by encouraging healthy diets through restricted advertising and healthier food environments, commissioning resources for infant feeding, ensuring clear food labelling, improving the nutritional content of food & drink, and making it easier for people to be and stay active;
- Launching a mental health prevention package that tackles risk factors and strengthens protective factors by encouraging people to take action to improve their own mental wellbeing while supporting investment and provision of resources (especially education and nature-based interventions and strategies) for mental health from local authorities;
- Reducing the impact that wider factors have on health, such as problem drinking (disproportionately prevalent among those in the lowest income bracket), drug misuse and poor sleep, by increasing the availability of alcohol alternative products by 2025, assessing opioid prescriptions as well as cannabis use responses, and evidence for sleep interventions;
- Supporting a lifetime course approach to prevention from early years (children's oral health) to creating healthy places with safe and connected communities, as well as green spaces and clean air, and allowing for active ageing for an increasing bracket of national and global populations;
- Embedding prevention strategies in policies, demonstrating and ensuring value for money institutionally, stimulating world-leading research, while enabling and delivering interventions through local action and individual empowerment.