

# Public health reform

## Summary

January 2019



## Introduction

Scotland's current health challenges are complex and go far beyond the control of the NHS, combining an ageing population; persistent 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.

The reform programme is consistent with the principles set out in the [Christie Commission Report on the Future Delivery of Public Services](#) and aims to improve population health through a whole system approach, focused on prevention and early intervention, and creating the conditions for wellbeing in our communities.

The shift to prevention, integration and closer collaboration to deliver improved population health outcomes is set out in the 2016 [Health and Social Care Delivery Plan](#) which contains three actions on reform:

- Develop and establish shared public health priorities for Scotland
- Establish a new national public health body
- Enable the whole system to work effectively together and support local public health activity.

## 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 health and wellbeing 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 consistent with the principles set out in the [Christie Commission Report on the Future Delivery of Public Services](#).

This will require a focus on delivering improvements in health across Scotland and at a 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 health and wellbeing.

## Vision for Scotland

The reform programmes 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.

## 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 - Public Health Scotland - bringing together national public health information & 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 public health in Scotland by December 2019. Public Health Scotland will be accountable to Scottish Government and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and will support, enable and provide challenge to the whole system of partners in the public, private and third sector to improve and protect health and wellbeing.

### **Public health priorities for Scotland**

Shared [public health priorities](#) for Scotland have been developed through a process of engagement. They provide a focus for closer collaboration and a joined up approach to improving health and wellbeing. Published in June 2018, these are priorities for the whole of Scotland they focus on the key public health challenges that by working together we can have the most significant impact on health. The priorities are:

**Priority 1:** A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities.

**Priority 2:** A Scotland where we flourish in our early years.

**Priority 3:** A Scotland where we have good mental wellbeing.

**Priority 4:** A Scotland where we reduce the use of and harm from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

**Priority 5:** A Scotland where we have a sustainable, inclusive economy with equality of outcomes for all.

**Priority 6:** A Scotland where we eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active.

### **Local Partnership**

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 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 and supporting collective action across Scotland to put the public's health at the heart of local decision making.