

Public Health and the General Election 2017 – ‘Fit for our children’s future’

Introduction – Embedding Health in All Policies

[The Faculty of Public Health](#) welcomes the General Election. **The next Government will have a great opportunity to think more about our long term health, embed health in all policies, and work with people and communities to focus on preventing ill health and thus ease pressure on our overburdened NHS.**

We therefore hope that all political parties set out within their manifestos their plans for health and health care. The next Government can secure our future generation’s wellbeing by building a health-creating society, supported by all sectors of the economy and the wider population.

It can accelerate and fund a world-class health and care system. It can strengthen the UK’s role as a global centre for human health research, biomedical and life sciences, and strengthen the UK’s leadership on global health problems. And, it can support health and scientific institutions to develop and restore a healthy UK society. Improving the health of our people will improve the productivity of our nation; enhancing our health and care industries will provide a platform for health-related job creation: the ‘Health Dividend’.

I. Brexit – Realising the ‘Health dividend’

We can harness the many opportunities to build on the health, social and environmental beneficial collaborations developed through the EU, through a *health in all policies* approach. In particular, FPH is keen to work with the next Government to take action in five priority areas:

- 1. Consumer Protection:** Preserve and enhance the provisions of European legislation on the environment, consumer safety, food quality, human rights and social policy – to make an even greater contribution to better UK health and wellbeing and to make this central to the UK’s economic plans.
- 2. Research and Collaborations:** Continue to benefit from the EU’s public health, research and development programmes and collaborations, to ensure that we remain a global centre of research excellence.
- 3. Farming, Agriculture, Fisheries:** Ensure fair, healthy, humane and environmentally sustainable policies for food, farming, fishing, forestry and land use. Self-sufficiency in agriculture and food is a key long term goal. We can pay our farmers more fairly and improve the environment and human nutrition and health.
- 4. Trade:** Promote sustainable, efficient and equitable growth by placing health, the reduction of inequalities, and the right to health at the heart of the UK’s economic strategy and free trade and investment agreements.
- 5. Health and Social Care Workforce:** Guarantee the right to remain of the EEA health and social care workforce; support the economic and social health of the communities we work within; secure a sustainable workforce; and promote employment policy ensuring the UK attracts health and social care skills from the EU and beyond.

II. Health & Social Care Funding – Prevention is better than cure

Since 2010, there have been cuts to public health budgets in much of the United Kingdom, and particularly so in England and Northern Ireland. Health service and public health funding are intertwined. It is a false distinction and a false economy to consider them as separate.

Further cuts to public health funding will significantly worsen the health and wellbeing of local populations. Cuts will also increase inequalities across the life course, particularly hard to reach groups; compromise health protection and health improvement functions; and undermine the provision of population healthcare advice. They will thus increase the burden of preventable non-communicable disease, further increasing pressure on the NHS (already spending 70% of its budget managing long-term conditions).

The public health budgets in England, announced in 2015, provoked **united concern and condemnation** from NHS England, Public Health England, the Local Government Association, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Kings Fund, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the Royal College of Nursing, the **Parliamentary Health Select Committee and the entire public health community.**

FPH believes the next government (and the devolved administrations) should commit to redressing cuts in public health investment and committing to progressive increases in investment.

III. The Specialist Workforce in Public Health

Public health specialists have the vital skills and expertise to protect and improve the health of the public, reducing the burden of disease, disability and death.

They work at local, regional and national levels, and in a broad variety of settings – health service, governmental, academic, private and voluntary sectors – across the four nations of the UK. They protect the public from major communicable disease and environmental risks and emergencies. They design and deliver policies to keep the public healthy. They offer specialist input on evidence-based clinically effective care pathways, service specifications and indicators to improve patient outcomes, and design, monitor and evaluate service performance. They apply health economics to ensure local priority setting on health represents value for money – important in a challenging financial context.

Since 2010, there have been reductions in the employed specialist public health workforce, particularly in England and Northern Ireland. **Shortages in the specialist public health workforce have very serious implications for population (and patient) health.**

We will work with the next government to redress this loss of life-saving expertise, to restore training and investment and rebuild the workforce to protect and improve the nation's health. Funding should be directed towards: targeted efforts to build on the current workforce and to counter rates of attrition; funded education and training from entry to post graduate level; making long-term career and professional development opportunities attractive; and identifying and providing specific training in areas where there is a skills deficit. **We also need joined-up action across government and the health and social care professions** to address the workforce challenges facing the NHS.

Start Well, Live Better – A Manifesto for the Public's Health

[FPH's manifesto, Start Well, Live Better](#), published in 2014, set out our **12-point action plan for public health**. Still as relevant today, it is the culmination of extensive consultation with our members about the top public health priorities for this government and the next. From child health to climate change, it sets out **12 important, practical and evidence based actions, across four themes**, for anyone serious about giving our children the best possible chance of a healthy and happy life.

- **Give children the best start in life:** Implement the [1001 Critical Days report](#); make statutory, personal, social, health and economic and sex and relationship education, reinstate 2 hours a week of physical activity in schools.
- **Introduce effective laws to prevent bad health and save lives:** Stop marketing of junk foods high in sugar, fat and salt before the 9pm watershed on TV, and tighten online marketing restrictions; introduce a 20% duty on sugar sweetened beverages; introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol of at least 50p per unit; implement standardised tobacco packaging; and set a 20mph maximum speed limit in built up areas.
- **Help people live healthier lives:** Give everyone in paid employment and training a living wage; reaffirm commitment to a universal healthcare system, free at the point of use, funded through general taxation.
- **Take national action to tackle a global problem:** Invest in public and active transport, and implement a cross-national approach to meet climate change targets, including 100% renewables and a zero-carbon energy system.

The challenge from the majority who called for the UK to leave the European Union was for us to 'take control', to be self-sufficient, self-reliant, and to better fund our health service. **FPH believes the next UK government should take the opportunity to address big questions which can improve our health**, our environment, our educational achievements and our economy. Among those crucial questions are: can the UK feed itself? Can the UK house itself? Can the UK power itself? Can the UK support itself? Can the UK care for itself? And can the UK grow healthier, for the wellbeing of future generations?

If you would like to learn more, please contact:

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