

## Press Release

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# Delay to Public Health Grant will cause ‘avoidable and unacceptable’ harm

**With just one month to go before the new financial year, over 30 leaders of public health, NHS bodies and health charities are calling on the Government to urgently publish next year’s public health grant allocation.**

The coalition, led by the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), the NHS Confederation, the Local Government Association (LGA), the Faculty of Public Health (FPH) and the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), are also urging ministers to increase investment in public health and prevention – a strategy which although known to have a long-term benefits to individuals, communities, the NHS and wider economy, has been repeatedly overlooked in recent years.

In the joint statement, leaders across the sector have said:

The Government’s delay in publishing the Public Health Grant allocation for 2023/24 is putting public health services at risk and adding unnecessary strain on an already pressured system.

In addition to not yet knowing what the public health budget will look like for the coming year, we are extremely concerned that the delay will be exacerbated by either only a small increase or another flat cash settlement.

Despite several important Government strategies being sidelined or delayed, including the health disparities and gambling reform white papers and Khan review, there have been a series of promising announcements giving a commitment to public health initiatives. However, these initiatives are not being adequately – or consistently – funded.

Instead, funding has been cut in real terms by almost a quarter since 2015. While the current investment is of course welcomed, anything less than inflation is in effect a cut and, as a result, it is impossible for providers to keep up, either with policy ambitions or the growing demand on these vital public health services. We simply cannot keep delivering more for less.

Without investing in evidence-based measures that are proven to prevent and reduce physical and mental ill health, demand on the NHS will continue to rise, sickness in the workforce will continue to increase and the economy will continue to suffer as a result.

**Greg Fell, ADPH Vice President** and Director of Public Health for Sheffield, said:

“This grant directly funds local services that protect and improve people’s health. With just four weeks to go until the start of the new financial year, Directors of Public Health and their teams are having to second guess how much money they will have to spend on areas like sexual and reproductive health, drug and

alcohol treatment, stop smoking services and early years support.

“We can’t plan high quality, value for money, services without knowing how much money there is to spend on them. As a result, individuals, their families – and therefore their communities – will undoubtedly suffer purely as a result of an avoidable and unacceptable delay in decision making.”

**Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation** said:

“Health leaders across the NHS system know the critical role public health provision plays in reducing pressure on services and crucially, keeping people and communities well.

“In their first year as statutory bodies, Integrated Care Systems know they have a driving role to play in building population health and reducing health inequalities, and ICS leaders are raring to go with this part of their role, with many ICSs already undertaking important and innovative work. They do however need adequate support from government to enable them to work effectively in partnership with local authorities, the VCSE sector and others to bring about the shift needed in how we approach health.

“The ongoing uncertainty around funding for services for the next financial year is undermining the ability of local health leaders to make the best use of the allocations in the interests of the communities they serve. After eight years of real terms cuts to the public health grant a rise by anything less than the current rate of inflation will stymie progress in the face of increasing need.”

**Councillor David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board**, said:

“Demand for vital treatment including mental health support was high before the pandemic. In the aftermath of the pandemic, it is even more urgent that these services are properly funded.

“Councils continue to be in the dark about public health funding and this can’t go on. Residents and our communities need clarity.

“Every pound invested by Government in council-run services such as public health helps to relieve pressure on other services like the NHS and the criminal justice system.

“The Government needs to give councils the clarity they need so they can increase investment to protect the health of our local communities over the coming months and years and to ensure all local authorities can continue to meet their public health responsibilities into the future.”

**Professor Kevin Fenton, FPH President**, said:

“As local services respond to multiple concurrent threats to health, exacerbated by the mounting cost-of-living crisis, councils desperately need clarity on funding allocations to make critical decisions on frontline services which are in place to protect and improve the public’s health.

“We hope that this year’s Public Health Grant will reflect the mounting pressures on these services and recognise the proven value that they offer in promoting population health and economic productivity.”

**William Roberts, RSPH CEO**, added:

“Public health grants fund essential local services that help keep communities healthy, productive, and prosperous. Delaying this critical local funding makes no sense. With Government focusing again on prevention, it is essential that local teams are given the resources to do what they do brilliantly.”

**ENDS**

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**About us:**

**The Association of Directors of Public Health** is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. It represents the professional views of all DsPH as the local leaders for the nation's health.

The Association has a heritage dating back over 160 years and is a collaborative organisation, working in partnership with others to strengthen the voice for public health. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through collating and presenting the views of DsPH; advising on public health policy and legislation at a local, regional, national and international level; facilitating a support network for DsPH; and providing opportunities for DsPH to develop professional practice.

It is a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee, and is led by its Board of Directors who are all serving Directors of Public Health. The President acts as chair.

**The UK Faculty of Public Health** is a joint faculty of the three Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom (London, Edinburgh and Glasgow). We are a membership organisation for approximately 4,000 public health professionals across the UK and around the world and our role is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and national populations. We do this by supporting the training and development of the public health workforce and improving public health policy and practice in partnership with local and national governments in the UK and globally.

**The Local Government Association** is a membership organisation representing over 350 councils in England and Wales. The LGA is a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

**The NHS Confederation** is the membership organisation that brings together, supports and speaks for the whole healthcare system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The members we represent employ 1.5 million staff, care for more than 1 million patients a day and control £150 billion of public expenditure. We promote collaboration and partnership working as the key to improving population health, delivering high-quality care and reducing health inequalities.

**The Royal Society for Public Health** is an independent health education and campaigning charity, committed to improving and protecting the public's health and wellbeing. We are the world's longest-established public health body with over 5000 members who are committed to supporting the public's health. Our activities include providing qualifications, e-learning, accreditation and programmes. We also campaign on a wide range of issues to support better health and wellbeing for the public.