



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# PHE Strategy 2020-25

Executive summary

September 2019

## Foreword



This strategy outlines our foremost priorities which we will focus on for the next five years to both protect people and help people to live longer in good health.

When we think about good health, the vast majority of us think about our NHS and the care we get through hospitals and GPs. But the NHS of itself cannot improve the health of the nation. This depends more substantially on a prosperous economy and the choices that we make as individuals and families.

The most important contributors to a life in good health, including mental health, are to have a job that provides a sufficient income, a decent and safe home and a support network. More simply put – a job, a home and a friend.

There is obviously an ethical reason for caring about all of this, but there is an even more evident economic one. For children, what matters to their future economic prosperity is to have the best possible start in life and to be ready to learn when starting school. For young people entering adulthood, it is to have something meaningful to do in education, training or employment. For adults, it is to have a job and, when unwell, to be able to keep that job.

There is a 19 year difference in years spent in good health between the most affluent and the poorest communities and we see the effect of this at all stages of life, starting with our children. Prosperity shared broadly across all communities is how nations improve productivity and become both healthier and wealthier.

The next most important factor affecting our health are the choices that we make, which contribute up to 40% of early deaths and poor health. The four biggest risks are whether we choose to smoke, what and how much we choose to eat, whether we exercise and how much alcohol we drink, with obesity and smoking competing for top spot.

Running parallel to this is the critical importance of keeping people safe and avoiding the threats of infectious disease and environmental hazards. Our experts work around the clock to protect people and act when harm does occur.

Through these priorities, working with everyone at home and overseas, we can strengthen the public health system and make the country healthier, fairer and safer.

Duncan Selbie,  
Chief Executive

## Our purpose

Public Health England works 24/7 to protect and improve the nation's health and reduce health inequalities.

We are guided by a number of aims:

- **our first duty is to keep people safe.** Threats from environmental hazards and infectious disease remain great at home and from overseas. We work to prevent risks from materialising and reduce harm when they do. PHE has the capability to respond to emergencies and incidents round the clock, 365 days a year
- **we work to prevent poor health.** Our aim is for people to live longer in good health, to rely on the NHS and social care less and later in life, to remain in work for longer and, when unwell, to stay in their own homes for longer
- **we work to narrow the health gap.** There is still huge disparity in the number of years lived in poor health between the most and least deprived people across the country. Many conditions also take a disproportionate toll on minority communities. Our work aims to reduce these unjust and avoidable inequalities in health outcomes
- **we support a strong economy.** Good health is an asset to the UK economy, enabling people to live long and productive working lives; securing the health of the people is a UK investment in our economic future

# The opportunities

## The public's health

### Making the economic case for prevention

Evidence shows that prevention and early intervention represent good value for money. Well-chosen interventions implemented at scale help people to avoid poor health, reduce the growth in demand on public services, and support economic growth.

### Optimising behavioural science

Whether it is encouraging smokers to quit, increasing uptake of the NHS Health Check, or reducing the number of inappropriate prescriptions for antibiotics, behavioural science has an ever-increasing role in informing our work with insights into why people make the decisions they do.

### Realising the potential of new technologies

From online tools to wearable devices, technology is opening up new opportunities to monitor our health, identify problems earlier and reach people with tailored advice and support. The expanding role of technology within public health goes hand in hand with advances in how we collect, combine, analyse and utilise different kinds of population and personal data.

### Harnessing progress in science and research

We are seeing continuing advances and innovation in science and research that are expanding our understanding of health and disease. The knowledge and evidence we gain from this can be used to create real change through policies and services. For example, whole genome sequencing is already helping us to deal more quickly and decisively with disease outbreaks and food safety incidents.

### Supporting our system partners

PHE is part of a system. We maximise our impact as an organisation by working with and through partners across the public health system, who are increasingly recognising the importance of prevention. Prevention has been put centre stage for the NHS through the NHS Long Term Plan and PHE will work nationally and regionally in supporting the implementation of this.

### Creating healthy communities

By working ever more closely together in a place, local authorities, the NHS and community organisations can secure better outcomes for the people who live there. This creates opportunities to promote place-based approaches and support the process of integrating services locally, including through the devolution of powers.



## Our local and national presence

PHE has local bases across England and three main scientific campuses, with approval to develop a new national science campus at PHE Harlow:

### PHE Chilton



Includes the headquarters of the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE). CRCE operates from 11 locations over England, Scotland and Wales

### PHE Harlow



PHE future national campus for public health science, bringing together the work of PHE Colindale, PHE Porton and the PHE HQ

### PHE Porton



Includes departments for rare and imported pathogens, research, culture collections and emergency response, plus food, water and environmental services

### PHE Colindale



Includes infectious disease surveillance and control, reference microbiology, other specialist services such as sequencing and high containment microbiology, plus food, water and environmental services



# Our role

We work as One PHE, making the best possible use of the expertise and commitment of our people to deliver the biggest impact and best value for the taxpayer and our partners.

## Building relationships

We work with partners locally, nationally and internationally, utilising our collective capabilities to address public health challenges, focusing on people and place as the organising principle.

### Influencing agendas

We produce data, analysis and scientific research that provide authoritative information on the big factors affecting the public's health and use this evidence to influence the priorities of national and local government and the NHS.

### Shaping policy and practice

We identify and promote effective evidence-based solutions to public health problems. Our advice informs real-world policy, practice and the delivery of essential services by our partners.

### Delivering services

We deliver a number of crucial public health services and interventions, from responding to emergencies at local, national and global level to direct-to-the-public campaigns which reach millions.

### Building system capability

We build capability, fostering research and innovation and supporting health and care professionals with the training, guidance and standards they need to deliver effective interventions to improve the public's health.

By integrating the reduction of inequalities into everything we do, we stand the best chance of tackling long-standing injustices and improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.

## Reducing inequalities in all that we do

## Our priorities

We have considered what PHE should focus on for the next five years to both protect people and help people to live longer in good health. The priorities outlined in this strategy are of course not everything that we are responsible for or will be doing (for example, on cancer, sexual and reproductive health and screening), but they are those where we believe we can have the biggest impact, where:

- we see major implications for the public's health
- there is substantial scope to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities
- PHE is well-placed to make a significant contribution
- we can generate a good return on investment



**1**  
Smoke-free society



**2**  
Healthier diets, healthier weight



**3**  
Cleaner air



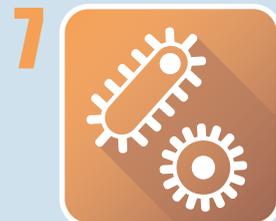
**4**  
Better mental health



**5**  
Best start in life



**6**  
Effective responses to major incidents



**7**  
Reduced risk from antimicrobial resistance



**8**  
Predictive prevention



**9**  
Enhanced data and surveillance capabilities



**10**  
New national science campus

## We will promote a healthier nation

# 1 in 6

deaths in the UK  
attributable to smoking



# 1.2 million

life years lost each year as  
a result of excess weight



# 28,000 to 36,000

deaths caused by  
air pollution each year



# £105 billion

total annual cost  
to society of  
mental ill health



### We will:

- 
 take steps towards creating a **smoke-free society** by 2030
- 
 help make the healthy choice the easy choice to improve **diets** and reduce rates of childhood **obesity**
- 
 develop and share advice on how best to reduce **air pollution** levels and people's exposure to polluted air
- 
 promote good **mental health** and contribute to the prevention of mental illness

### Our vision for 2025

- lower smoking rates
- less sugar, calories and salt in the food eaten every day
- less pollution in the air that we breathe
- measurable improvements in mental health
- improved mental health literacy

## We will work towards a fairer society

# 19 years

gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest communities



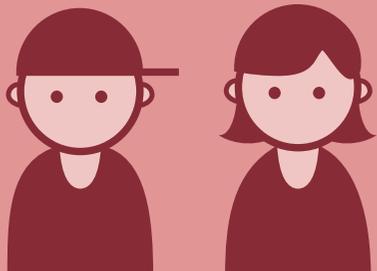
# 19.3%

the gap in smoking rates between the most deprived (27.2%) and least deprived (7.9%) communities



# 29.3%

of children not ready for school at age 5



# 10 to 20%

of women experience mental health problems during pregnancy and the first year after having a baby



### We will:

5



work to improve the health of babies, children and their families to provide the **best start in life** and the foundations of good health into adulthood



incorporate the reduction of health inequalities into each of the ten priorities

### Our vision for 2025

- reduced inequalities in infant mortality, school readiness and childhood obesity
- reduced gap in smoking rates between the least and most deprived communities
- lower rates of premature mortality among people with long-term and severe mental health problems
- fewer cases of poor health among vulnerable populations caused by air pollution and outbreaks of infectious disease

## We will keep the public safe 24/7

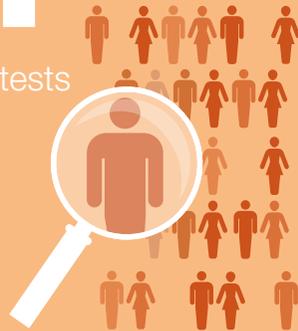
over  
**10,000**

PHE responses to disease outbreaks and emergencies each year



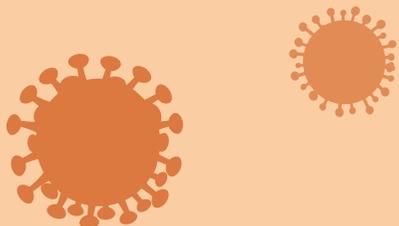
More than  
**21** million

screening tests for health conditions performed each year



**10** million

deaths worldwide each year caused by drug-resistant disease if we fail to take decisive action by 2050



**16** deployments

of UK public health experts to support responses to international crises since 2016



### We will:

6



enhance our ability to respond to **major incidents** (including pandemic influenza) by strengthening our health protection system

7



work to help contain, control and mitigate the risk of **antimicrobial resistance**

### Our vision for 2025

- lower rates of key drug-resistant infections
- reduced use of antibiotics to prevent the development of further antimicrobial resistance
- a refreshed plan for handling an influenza pandemic
- a strengthened health protection system at national and local level capable of handling all major threats to health

## We will strengthen the public health system

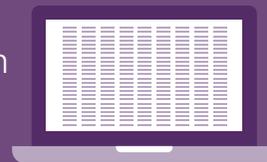
more than  
**5** million

downloads of PHE's  
Change4Life  
food scanner  
app since  
2016



over **50** million

clinical records linked  
each year by PHE's  
National  
Disease  
Registration  
Service



### We will:

- 8  utilise technology to develop targeted advice and interventions and support **personalised public health and care** at scale
- 9  improve our **data** capability and strengthen our approach to disease **surveillance** using new tools and techniques
- 10  transition to a new national science campus with state-of-the-art facilities at **PHE Harlow**

more than  
**5** million

microbiology tests  
carried out  
by PHE labs  
each year



**900**

peer-reviewed  
publications  
from PHE  
scientists  
each year



### Our vision for 2025

A public health system that:

- uses behavioural science and digital technologies to provide the public with a range of personalised preventative interventions
- draws on joined-up data sources to gain new insights into the public's health
- has quicker access to high quality health intelligence to inform improved decision-making and responses to health protection incidents
- has at its heart a new national centre of public health science at PHE Harlow

## How we will develop as an organisation

This strategy has been developed by all parts of PHE and in consultation with our partners, and everyone will have a part to play in delivering it. We will embed the strategy into our corporate planning, governance and performance management, ensuring it is supported by multi-year programmes and plans.

### Developing our people

We will give our people the skills and knowledge they need to meet the challenges we face. We will seek to achieve the right mix of flexibility and deep expertise and a work environment that supports good physical and mental health

### Improving our processes

We will embed ways of working across the organisation that enhance the quality and consistency of our decisions and delivery. These will ensure that we make the most of the talents within PHE and provide value for money

### Realising the potential of new technology

We will use cutting edge tools and techniques to increase our efficiency and produce new insights and approaches to public health problems

# About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, research, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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