

Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s – statement to Parliament

Further to the [Prevention Vision](#) published on 5 November 2018, I wish to inform the House of the publication of the green paper, [Advancing our Health: prevention in the 2020s](#). The consultation will run for 12 weeks.

For the first 70 years of the NHS, we have been successful in helping people live longer. Life expectancy has increased by almost 30 years over the past century. Cancer survival rates are up, mortality rates from heart disease and stroke are down.

Despite this progress, over 20% of our lives are spent in poor health. On average, men born today can expect to live 16 years in poor health and women 19 years. There is also a clear social gradient, with people in deprived areas living shorter lives in poorer health. Now we must move from thinking about life span to health span: the number of years we can expect to live healthy, independent lives.

The NHS is already making good progress, placing prevention at the heart of its Long Term Plan and supported by our record £20.5 billion additional investment. In the years ahead, the challenge is to deliver on these commitments, to move from a national treatment service (focused on illness) to a national wellness service (focused on good health), and to work even more closely with local authorities who have specific responsibilities around prevention and influence many of the determinants of good health.

As well as modernising prevention services, we also need to lay the foundations for good health across society and make healthy choices easier. This is because less than a quarter of our health is shaped by the services we receive.

Our health is our greatest asset. Just as we save for our retirement, we should be investing in our health throughout life. We know that some people find this easier than others. Not because of innate differences in their values or beliefs, but because of differences in their experiences and circumstances. We believe that everybody has the right to a solid foundation on which to build their health. This means giving our children a good start and growing the conditions for good health throughout life.

When it comes to living a healthy life, the modern world presents many challenges. It can feel like the odds are stacked against us. This green paper is not about nannying but making healthier choices easier for people, so they are empowered to make decisions that are right for them and their families. To live a healthy, happier life, evidence suggests our focus should be on: eating a healthy diet, being physically active, being smoke-free and taking care of our mental health.

The commitments in the green paper help us towards our mission of healthy,

happier lives. We aim to publish a government response by spring 2020, setting out our proposals in more detail.

Health is a shared responsibility. Only by working together can we achieve our vision of healthier, happier lives for everyone.