

# New Office for Health Promotion to drive improvement of nation's health

- New Office for Health Promotion will lead national efforts to improve and level up the public's health
- It will help ministers design and operationalise a step change in public health policy
- New approach will see action across government to improve the nation's health by tackling obesity, improving mental health and promoting physical activity

The new Office for Health Promotion will lead national efforts to improve and level up the health of the nation by tackling obesity, improving mental health and promoting physical activity.

The Office will recruit an expert lead who will report jointly into the Health Secretary and the Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty. The Office's remit will be to systematically tackle the top preventable risk factors causing death and ill health in the UK, by designing, implementing and tracking delivery policy across government. It will bring together a range of skills to lead a new era of public health polices, leveraging modern digital tools, data and actuarial science and delivery experts.

The Office for Health Promotion will sit within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), and will lead work across government to promote good health and prevent illness which shortens lives and costs the NHS billions every year, building on the work of Public Health England.

It will enable more joined-up, sustained action between national and local government, the NHS and cross-government, where much of the wider determinants of health sit.

A large proportion of people's health outcomes (around 80%) are not related to the healthcare they receive but due to wider preventable risk factors (such as diet, smoking, exercise). The new Office will help inform a new cross-government agenda which will look to track these wider determinants of health and implement policies in other departments where appropriate. This Office and approach will be modelled on successful methods to this agenda internationally, such as in Singapore, which has a Health Promotion Board, and has pioneered new digital public health schemes, such as their 'National Steps Challenge'.

The Office will address and tackle important public health issues, including obesity and nutrition, mental health across all ages, physical activity,

sexual health, alcohol and tobacco, amongst other areas.

As England cautiously eases restrictions over the coming months, preventing the onset of avoidable physical and mental illness and protecting the nation's health will be the top priority for this government. From today, outdoor organised support resumes as part of the roadmap, and the government is urging people to get outside and get active to help improve their health and prevent some illnesses.

The new office will recruit expert leadership, ensuring it is informed by high-quality data and evidence to support decision-making and delivery to improve health across the nation.

The new Office will combine Public Health England's health improvement expertise with existing DHSC health policy capabilities, in order to promote and deliver better health to communities nationwide. By combining and enhancing these functions, the Office will play a vital role in helping the public lead healthier lives.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The new Office for Health Promotion will be crucial in tackling the causes, not just the symptoms, of poor health and improving prevention of illnesses and disease.

Covid-19 has demonstrated the importance of physical health in our ability to tackle such illnesses, and we must continue to help people to lead healthy lives so that we can all better prevent and fight illnesses.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Good physical and mental health are central to our happiness and well-being. Yet so much of what keeps us healthy happens outside of hospital and the health service.

By establishing the Office for Health Promotion we will bring health promotion into the heart of Government, working to the Chief Medical Office, so we can level up the health of our nation, working across national and local government.

Prevention is better than cure. By putting in place innovative prevention measures, we can help everyone to live longer, healthier lives as we ease back to normality, and relieve pressures from our NHS.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many of the vulnerabilities in the health of the population – from obesity to mental ill health, and it is more important than ever to support people in achieving healthier lives.

Ill-health amongst working-age people alone costs the economy around £100 billion a year. By focusing on the prevention of poor health and improving health outcomes, this will reduce the pressures on the NHS, social care, and other public services.

The plans set out today will ensure there is a focus across the whole of government to deliver greater action on prevention of ill health. There will be a new cross-government ministerial board on prevention, which will drive forward and co-ordinate action on the wider determinants of health to level up inequalities.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, said:

Preventing ill health and supporting our communities to live healthy lives is very important.

The non-direct harms of Covid on the public's health will not be trivial. We need an evidence-informed and collaborative approach to health promotion and to support this recovery.

The Office for Health Promotion will work across both national and local government as well as with the NHS, academia, the third sector, scientists, researchers and industry to develop evidence informed policies.

The government will also be strengthening the national focus and capability of NHS England and the focus of local health partners on supporting better health, as part of a drive to put better population health front and centre for the whole health and care system.

This forms a key part of the planned Health and Care White Paper, with integrated care systems bringing together the collective resources and strengths of the local system, the NHS, local authorities, the voluntary sector and others to improve the health of their area.

By joining up care, this will level up inequalities across the country and address the many determinants of health and wellbeing, to prevent or intervene early in ill health.

Important progress has been made in recent decades enabling people to live longer, healthier lives, but evidence shows that, on average, 20% of people's lives are spent in poor health.

Today's announcement follows the establishment of the new UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), set to launch in April. With the UKHSA leading on health security, the Office for Health Promotion will focus on health improvement, leading at a national level to exert influence across the health and care system and beyond.

The Office for Health Promotion will be established by the autumn. The government will set out more detail on plans and ambitions for improving the

public's health later this year.

[Work, Health and Disability Green Paper Data, 2016](#)

[PHE The Health Profile for England 2018: Chapter 1](#)