



The Association of Directors of Public Health

ADPH Statement: Budget 2017

Introduction

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DPH) in the UK. 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.

The Association has a rich heritage, its origins dating back more than 160 years. It is a collaborative organisation working in partnership with others to maximise the voice for public health. This brief statement sets out our key priorities in advance of the Budget 2017.

Failing to invest in prevention is counter-productive

First and foremost, we continue to stress that investing in public health is vital for relieving the pressures on both NHS and social care budgets and making broad societal returns on investments in the long-term. The Five Year Forward view cannot be delivered without increased focus on, and investment in, prevention and public health.

This point is of particular importance given that the Local Government Finance Bill, which introduces the system of retention of 100% of business rate revenue to local government, is progressing through Parliament and the ring-fence on the public health grant is set to be removed in 2018/19. The system of redistribution needs to be fair and robust so that health inequalities are not worsened.

Action is needed on alcohol pricing

We support the findings of the recent evidence review of alcohol policy by Public Health England which concludes that reducing the affordability of alcohol is the most effective and cost effective way of reducing alcohol harms. The Chancellor should introduce a minimum unit price (MUP) of 50p per unit and the reintroduction of the duty escalator on alcohol. Targeted pricing measures are particularly effective at reducing harm in those groups most at risk, such as heavy drinkers and young people. MUP would have an imperceptible impact on the overall cost of alcohol consumption for lower risk drinkers and lead to no change at all in pub prices.

Tobacco still kills

We urge the government to publish a new Tobacco Control Plan as soon as possible. The government needs to commit to finding a sustainable solution to funding tobacco control including stop smoking services, mass media campaigns and action to tackle the illicit trade of tobacco. The tobacco tax escalator should be raised from 2% above inflation to 5% above inflation. We would urge the government to continue with its intention to introduce a Minimum Excise Tax on cigarettes in the Finance Bill 2017.

We support the Soft Drinks Industry Levy

We support the government's plans to introduce a Soft Drinks Industry Levy however we would have liked to have seen firmer action from the government on childhood obesity, particularly on the issue of marketing of high fat, salt and sugar foods to children. We would also like to see more flexibility and

powers for local authorities to tackle the obesogenic environment particularly in regard to planning and licensing regulation. The levy should be introduced at a level that introduces prices by 20% or more, as that is where there is best evidence for impact.

We are supportive of the Local Government Association's call for revenue from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to be distributed to local authorities to enable them to tackle obesity in a way that is appropriate to their local areas. Local authorities have the best possible understanding of the health needs of their areas and what particular interventions would work best to reduce child obesity.

Improving air quality should be a budget priority

Air pollution continues to be a great threat to population health, both in the UK and globally. We welcome the government's recent proposals to implement Clean Air Zones in five UK cities but the problem is not restricted to these areas and more can be done at a national level to tackle the problem.

As a first step we urge the Treasury to commit to undertaking an evaluation of a potential National Diesel Scrapage Fund to bring down the number of diesel vehicles on our roads, to obtain clarity on the costs and benefits of such a scheme. This would be a two-year national fund administered at local level. There also needs to be a wider fiscal approach that increases incentives for low emission vehicles such as electric cars, and supports the uptake of active forms of travel such as walking and cycling.

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