



The Association of Directors of Public Health

ADPH statement on the outcome of the EU referendum

ADPH calls for an assessment of the health impact of all new government policies

“The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend.” Benjamin Disraeli

UK politicians will be faced with some important decisions over the coming weeks, months and years in the light of the outcome of the EU referendum. The Association of Directors of Public Health asks for the health of the public to be front and centre of those judgements. There is no greater asset to an individual, family and community than their health and wellbeing.

ADPH is calling for an assessment of the health impact of all new government policies. This is increasingly common practice in local government. Measures to maximise opportunities to improve health, and minimise any adverse consequences of leaving the EU for health should be taken, including health impact assessments in areas that have previously seen significant investment through the EU.

The consequences of the referendum on the UK’s future in Europe are far from clear. The negotiations and the position of the UK afterwards could impact on the health of our populations, both positively and negatively. Whatever we feel about the referendum, the electorate have expressed their wish. And this will have major implications as yet unclear for us. Whatever side of the debate, whatever political party, it is now essential that we look to safeguard the future of public health services and functions.

ADPH, a UK wide body, is committed to playing its part in protecting and improving the health of the population through and beyond the negotiations into whatever shape the United Kingdom takes. It is well evidenced that for a population to be prosperous, it has to be healthy, both mentally and physically. We believe there are several key things for the country to do.

1. Assess the impacts of proposed outcomes of negotiations, and proposed new policies on the health of the population
2. Ensure that the gap between most and least healthy is narrowed, not widened
3. Act to protect the most vulnerable
4. Focus on improving education, skills and employability of our workforce
5. Focus on the steps to build a physically and mentally healthy and resilient population and workforce

Many of our services, as well as schools of public health, universities and research institutes have staff and students from the EU and beyond and receive significant EU financial support. These arrangements may become part of EU negotiations in the coming months. We remain fully committed to working together to share and develop our science and our practice across the UK and Europe.

We condemn racism and xenophobic abuse. These forms of abuse damage the health and competitiveness of our population and economy, and damage the social fabric which is the foundation of good health and wellbeing. We must all clearly and publicly affirm our commitment to fundamental human rights, reject all forms of racism and discrimination, and reiterate the universality, humanity and inclusiveness of our profession.



The determinants of our health

The most important determinants of our health are social and economic factors such as income, employment and education. The UK still has some shocking inequalities in these factors. The richest 10% of households hold 45% of all UK wealth,¹ the gender pay gap for all staff in the UK in 2013 was 19.7 per cent, as measured by hourly earnings for all employees², and 40% of pupils who are eligible for free school meals get five good GCSEs, compared to almost 70% of pupils who are not eligible for free school meals³; these are just three examples of the inequalities we face. There is a widening health gap between the rich and poor. It is vital that funding should be targeted at narrowing this gap, including replacing EU investment should this cease.

The Environment and our health

The environment we live in also affects our health; air pollution is estimated to contribute to 40,000 deaths a year in the UK⁴ for example. The contribution of air quality, action on climate change and active travel are all important issues for good health. Should the UK fall outside EU obligations, the government should seek to increase our ambition on these vital factors.

Protecting the public's health

Tobacco, alcohol and poor diet are also important in determining our health. Whilst the UK has seen some welcome progress, for example standardised packaging for tobacco, there is still much more to do. The government must not delay the publication of its strategy to tackle childhood obesity. The protection of the public's health should be paramount and improvements will contribute to increased employability and economic prosperity. Commercial interests that compete with this aspiration should be challenged.

ENDS

Further information

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is a Company Limited by guarantee with charity status registered in England and Wales and is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. The Association is hosted by the UK Health Forum.

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 150 years. It is a collaborative organisation working in partnership with others to maximise the voice for public health.

www.adph.org.uk

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1 ONS, (2015), [Wealth in Great Britain, 2012 to 2014](#)

2 Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2014), [Secondary Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap](#)

3 CMF, 2016, [Commission on Inequality in Education](#)

4 RCP, 2016, [Every breath we take; the lifelong impact of air pollution](#)