



The Association of Directors of Public Health

Five Year Transition Survey: Results

April 2018 marks five years since public health teams in England transitioned from the NHS to local authorities under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. In March 2018, the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) carried out a survey examining the views of Directors of Public Health (DsPH) on the five years since the transition.

Broadly, DsPH are supportive of the transition to local authorities and feel they can provide robust system leadership from within the local authority setting. However, they feel that the substantial cuts to the public health budget have had a detrimental effect and that transition had weakened the relationship between public health and the NHS. ADPH continues to advocate for public health to be funded sustainably and adequately in line with local population health need, for Directors of Public Health to be recognized as system leaders, and for the role of the NHS in prevention to be clearly defined. ADPH has explored these issues in a series of [policy position statements](#).

Survey results

We asked DsPH how positive they felt about the transition to local authorities. 56 DsPH responded, and the responses were as follows:

- Very positive or positive: 78.57%
- Neither positive or negative: 19.64%
- Negative or very negative: 1.79%

We also asked DsPH how much they agreed with a series of statements. 57 DsPH responded, and the responses were as follows:

	Completely/somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat/completely disagree
Being situated in the local authority has enabled the public health team to more effectively influence the social determinants of health	87.72%	8.77%	3.51%
Being situated in the local authority has enabled more effective working between the public health team and the local community	77.19%	21.05%	1.75%
Greater devolution of health and social care responsibility to the regions is a good opportunity for public health	73.68%	22.81%	3.51%

Being situated in the local authority has weakened the relationship between the public health team and the NHS	66.67%	10.53%	22.81%
Directors of Public Health can provide robust system leadership from within the local authority setting	89.47%	10.53%	0.00%
Cuts to the public health budget have had an adverse impact on population health outcomes	82.46%	8.77%	8.77%
Being situated in local government has reduced the attractiveness of roles in the public health team	59.65%	15.79%	24.56%

Finally, we also asked DsPH to provide quotes reflecting on their experience of the last five years. Here is a selection:

“Whilst very challenging at times, moving to local government has opened new horizons both professionally and more importantly tackling the determinants of health”

“Transition to local government has lifted the lid on how we can improve public health outcomes through tackling the wider determinants in an innovative and creative way”

“More transparency and more real than being in the NHS. Able to achieve more across a wider agenda than just running services”

“Two years before the transition I was genuinely unsure. Five years after I’m definitely sure it’s absolutely the right place to be, organisationally speaking

“Allowed us to influence policies which can create change in social determinants of health”

“I still feel the transition brings opportunities we did not have in the NHS. However, the timing of this transition with austerity measures which could have been predicted as inevitable has its toll and undermined what could have been and should have been an immensely positive move”

“Working in a local authority has provided opportunities to impact on population health in new and exciting ways, above and beyond what we were able to achieve within the NHS. This has been particularly important given the impact of austerity on local government and communities”

Association of Directors of Public Health

April 2018