



The Association of Directors of Public Health

Building support for action with local businesses

Recommendations from FrameWorks UK

Background

ADPH has received funding from The Health Foundation to undertake a three-year, four nations collaboration project focused on the commercial determinants of health (CDOH). The project aims to increase awareness and understanding of CDOH and its impact across health organisations, politicians and the public. Additionally, the project seeks to build consensus across different organisations with an interest in CDOH, ensuring a wider context which cuts across single issues such as tobacco, gambling, obesity and alcohol. Resources and guidance for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) will be developed as part of the project to enable them to work with local businesses and communities to maximise their health impact while addressing CDOH.

Context

The CDOH are the commercial sector activities that influence people's health, both positively and negatively. Globally, four industry sectors (tobacco, ultra-processed food, alcohol and fossil fuels) cause at least one third of deathsⁱ. The impact that CDOH have on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular disease and cancers, is widely reported. NCDs are the leading cause of death and disability in the UKⁱⁱ and are often the result of our social and physical environments, including CDOH. They are also a major contributor to the social gradient in health outcomes, driving health inequalities.

This document is the second of two, which outline the nine recommendations set out by FrameWorks UK during ADPH webinars held on Friday 29th September 2024 and Tuesday 29th October 2024. The first document, as well as a summary of the nine, are available on our website. The webinars brought together ADPH members and professionals working on CDOH to build understanding of the power of framing and provide practical recommendations on how to communicate about CDOH to build support for action.

Framing refers to the choices we make about what we say and how we say it. It's what we emphasise, how we explain an issue and what we leave unsaid. This is an important aspect of public health as mindsets guide our thinking. Our task as public health professionals is to strengthen the mindsets that are helpful in achieving social change and avoid those that are unhelpful to us.

[FrameWorks UK](#) is a not-for-profit communications research organisation. They work with charities, public sector bodies and other mission-driven organisations to identify the best ways to build understanding and support for social progress and issues like health inequalities and CDOH. The following recommendations from FrameWorks UK are designed to help professionals effectively reach the public, community and policymaker audiences by tapping into language and ideas that expand the public's mental model of how CDOH impacts health and spark a sense of collective responsibility for combating the negative impacts of CDOH.

Recommendations

Recommendation one: Tap into the value of moral leadership

- The ‘values’ frame primes and orientates our thinking – it universalises an issue and makes it feel more relevant to more people, tapping into helpful emotions.
- Remind people of our social responsibility to protect and support those who may be struggling. Local businesses can be reminded that they have a moral imperative to ‘do the right thing’, fostering pride in contributing positively to the community.
- Talking about our interdependence and the idea that a prosperous, flourishing society depends on everyone is also key. It normalises the idea that we are all connected and to ensure long term success we need collective action.

Recommendation two: Explain how local businesses shape health

- Explanation enables people to be brought into the conversation and understand how their surroundings shape their health.
- Metaphors can be used to disrupt people’s thinking patterns and introduce new perspectives. They create strong mental images that help convey complex ideas simply and memorably – without oversimplifying them. For example, adapting the ‘building blocks of health’ metaphor, which was originally developed to explain the wider determinants of health, can make the concept of CDOH more accessible.

Recommendation three: Use data wisely

- Presented alone, people can misinterpret data to align with their existing beliefs, so it is essential to present it alongside a story. Statistics need to be contextualised: why does this data matter? What is it about? What does it represent? And what can we do about it?
- Economic arguments aren’t as persuasive as we think. Solely focusing on economic statistics can be dehumanising and taps into an individual way of thinking. ‘Money’ frames tend to prime people to think individually, which can be counterproductive. Instead, economic benefits should be connected to the positive role businesses can play in shaping health, including how they can be part of the solution.

Recommendation four: Be results orientated

- Talk about the specific, concrete actions that local businesses can take and explain the positive impacts these actions will have.
- Explain the win-win, both for the business and the wider impacts on the health of the community.
- Share examples of good practice locally and nationally and consider starting with the results to demonstrate what can be achieved when health is prioritised in decision making.

ⁱ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)00013-2/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)00013-2/abstract)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/2385-commercial-determinants-health>