

# Briefing: Prevention Green Paper

July 2019

## Summary

“We know that a healthy child is much more likely to become a healthy adult, so the Government’s Prevention Green Paper is a welcome step towards creating a healthier, more prosperous society. The launch of a new health index that will help track the health of the nation alongside other top-level indicators is particularly encouraging, allowing trends to be identified early and appropriate action taken.

“However, where there is promise with the launch of a new health index to help track the health of the nation alongside other top-level indicators, measures to ban the sale of energy drinks to under 16s, to review front of pack labelling, develop a much needed vaccination strategy and to strengthen knowledge around infant feeding, there is one significant area omitted.

“The gap between rich and poor is growing yet the services that aim to support those most in need are shrinking. It is therefore hugely concerning that there is no reference to the reversal of public funding cuts in this paper. As a new Prime Minister takes office in Downing Street, my message to them is clear. Prioritise the health of infants, children and young people, push forward the welcome plans in this preventative Green Paper but invest in reducing health inequality, as it is this factor that rocks the foundations of society as a whole.”

Dr Max Davie, RCPCH Officer for Health Improvement

## RCPCH welcomes

- **Obesity** - The National Child Measurement Programme is due to be expanded to allow data to be shared directly with digital child health records, so it is accessible for parents, carers and health professionals. This will help health professionals make the move towards making every contact count with regards to preventing childhood obesity.
- **Nutrition** - A commitment to the publication of Chapter 3 of the Childhood Obesity Strategy, a ban on the sale of energy drinks to under 16s, salt reduction targets to be published for industry guidance, and a future consultation on clear labelling following exit from the EU.
- **Infant feeding** - The commissioning of an infant feeding survey, a challenge to business to improve the nutritional content of baby food, with a commitment to further action if sufficient progress is not made, and further work on improving the marketing and labelling of infant food.
- **Vaccinations** - A full vaccination strategy to be published in Spring 2020 which will include a UK measles and rubella elimination strategy.
- **Oral Health** - Progressive ideas on oral health in targeting and aiming to reach 30% of the most deprived 3 to 5 year olds with a toothbrushing scheme, and incentivising local authorities to fluoridate water supplies by giving them a share of the money saved on dental treatment in return.
- **Tobacco** - The introduction of the aim to make England smokefree by 2030 is ambitious and will disproportionately benefit the people in our society experiencing the most deprivation.
- **Health Index** - The launch of a new health index highlights a move towards a culture change in our society that signals that the health of our nation will be considered alongside other top-level indicators.

## What's missing

- **Mental Health** - Much of what's set out in the section on children and young people's mental health is a restatement of previous commitments. There is a focus on equipping teachers to recognise mental ill health among pupils, which is to be welcomed, but plans don't take into account the many pressures teachers are currently facing in the education sector.
- **Health Visitors** - The consultation document fails to mention health visitors at all – despite their invaluable role working with deprived families.
- **Taxes and levy's** - Whilst there are some commitments to consider further action on nutritional content in the future, there are no substantive public health interventions signalled akin to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy.
- **Funding** - No moratorium on the reduction in public health funding. Without a change in what money is available to local authorities, who are responsible for delivering many of the services focused on prevention, it is unclear how the ambitions of the green paper will be delivered.

**For further information please contact:**

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