


ELECTED MEMBER INDUCTION

Public Health





What's happening in Scotland's communities?

- ▶ **Poor overall health:** People in Scotland die younger than any other country in Western Europe.
- ▶ **Health inequalities:** People living in our poorest communities die about ten years before their neighbours in the wealthiest neighbourhoods, an issue common across all local authority areas.
- ▶ **Stalled improvement:** After decades of improving health, life expectancy in Scotland has not meaningfully improved since 2012.
- ▶ **COVID-19:** The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on our most at risk communities, widening existing inequalities. We need to deliver a national recovery that improves wellbeing and addresses inequality.

What's driving these trends?

The building blocks of healthy communities include good work, quality housing, support for children, education, and access to public services. There are gaps in these building blocks in too many of Scotland's communities. For example, constantly worrying about making ends meet can lead to chronic stress, putting people at increased risk of illnesses such as heart disease. If people can't afford safe housing, healthy food, and are unable to play an active role in society, this limits their choices and their ability to live a healthy life. While health inequalities were already being felt across Scotland before the pandemic, COVID-19 has weakened the building blocks of healthy communities, widening inequalities further. A renewed focus on prevention could help to change this. Working together, across the whole system, we can improve the health and wellbeing of our communities by:

- ▶ **Promoting health and wellbeing** by making sure our communities are not unfairly exposed to cheap alcohol, tobacco, and unhealthy food.
- ▶ **Investing in prevention** by strengthening the building blocks of health, like, ensuring access to good work, quality housing, the availability of greenspace, and making sure Scotland is ready to face future pandemics.
- ▶ **Prolonging healthy life** by making sure everyone has access to quality public services whenever they need to.



Public Health Scotland

As Scotland's national public health body, [Public Health Scotland](#) (PHS) is committed to supporting local government. Jointly sponsored by COSLA and the Scottish Government, PHS has been tasked with supporting local systems and leading a renewed focus on prevention and collaboration. It's doing this by working closely with system leaders, including local government, to deliver improvements in the health and wellbeing of communities.

Importantly, PHS will continue to engage with local government leaders and networks to provide practical support to help decision makers deliver for their communities. This support includes the providing insights, data, and evidence, and working with local public health teams to drive transformation in local systems. Agreed outcomes are measured against the National Performance Framework.

Looking to deliver long-term change, PHS will continue to strengthen its relationship with COSLA, the Improvement Service and local government more broadly to create a Scotland where everybody thrives.




The role of local government

Local authorities play a significant role in addressing and reducing health inequalities. Local government provides local leadership and is a key partner that develops and delivers a broad range of policies and services which contribute to tackling health inequalities, including:

- ▶ **Economic development:** helping people to live and work by creating, safeguarding, and attracting jobs and investment.
- ▶ **Neighbourhood planning:** planning for future generations through engagement with communities and developing sustainable plans to renew local areas.
- ▶ **Education:** providing the best possible start in life for children and young people, providing opportunities to learn and inspire learners to secure rewarding careers.
- ▶ **Social care:** safeguarding the lives of both the young and the old in care, helping people with complex needs to live independently at home.
- ▶ **Waste management:** managing vital collections of household and community waste, while encouraging less to landfill and greater reuse of finite resources.
- ▶ **Regulation powers for environmental health:** keeping people safe by policing food hygiene, approved premises, and monitoring air quality and noise pollution.
- ▶ **Housing:** providing safe, affordable homes, reducing fuel poverty through sustainable design, and responding to homelessness.
- ▶ **Road maintenance:** making sure communities and businesses stay connected through an accessible network of local roads.
- ▶ **Licensing:** making sure our poorest communities aren't disproportionately exposed to gambling, tobacco, or alcohol.
- ▶ **Culture and leisure:** providing affordable access to sport, leisure, and arts to actively promote physical and mental wellbeing.

Each of the above areas have direct influence on the places and communities in which we live, the jobs we do, how much money we have in our pockets – the building blocks of our overall health and wellbeing.



What does this mean for you as an elected member?

Councils shape communities and are place leaders. Local government is ideally placed to lead collaborative action to protect and improve health in communities. There are two ways councils can support this:

1. Adopt a Health in All Policies approach

Strongly advocated by the World Health Organization, [Health in All Policies](#) (HiAP) are defined as:



“An approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity.”

As elected members, adopting a Health in All Policy Approach can support councils take a strategic, targeted approach to the planning and delivery of services, understanding the health impact of all their activities.

2. As local system leaders

Local government is uniquely placed to use its local leadership to drive action across the building blocks of health to reduce health inequalities through local partnerships - including health and social care partnerships and community planning partnerships. For example:

- ▶ Make tackling health inequalities a collective goal.
- ▶ Ensure health and wellbeing and health inequalities are key considerations of policy and decision making.
- ▶ Invest in prevention and health creation prioritising areas such as children's services, housing, employment, and inclusive growth

Question: For existing and emerging policies and plans, can your approach be challenged and improved by using a Health in All Policies approach?

Question: What opportunities are there across local system partnerships to focus on improving public health and reducing health inequalities across our communities?



How Public Health Scotland can help

Public Health Scotland can support local authorities to access and use the data and intelligence they need to plan and make decisions, while providing clear advice about what actions they can take to make the biggest impact in improving population health.

Support from PHS includes the development of:

- ▶ **Joint needs assessments:** informing the planning and nature of future services through the targeted use of quantitative and qualitative information.
- ▶ **Strategic planning:** drawing from PHS's national networks and extensive data we can help to better understand local needs and plan to meet them.
- ▶ **Service design/redesign:** providing relevant services depends on fully understanding local needs and our evidence into knowledge approach can be used to align services to actual need.
- ▶ **Performance reporting:** as stewards of Scotland's healthcare data, we provide vital insight into the performance of health and social care services. We can use our insight to drive and inform improvement in your local authority area.
- ▶ **Whole system modelling/scenario planning:** by focussing on early intervention and connected local networks we can help elected members identify issues at source and plan to reduce health inequalities and increase life expectancy in their communities.
- ▶ **Digital:** leading collaboration and transformation in public services to improve health and wellbeing across the wider public health system through our [digital strategy](#) and data innovation

Public Health Scotland also works with directors of public health to support local government and partners from across the whole system, to drive local innovation, and quality improvement around health inequality work.

Find out more

Understand more about the health issues in your local authority by reading the [burden of disease summaries](#) from the Scottish Public Health Observatory.

For further information on PHS support for local government, email PHS Strategic Engagement and Policy: phs.strategicdevelopment@phs.scot

iHub
Quarrywood Court
Livingston
EH54 6AX

Tel: 01506 282012
Email: info@improvementservice.org.uk
www.improvementservice.org.uk

May 2022

*The 'go to' organisation for Local
Government improvement in Scotland*


improvement **service**