

Achievements and priorities in public health

This page describes some of the ways public health initiatives have had a positive impact. It also describes some of the continuing public health priorities we face today.



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Achievements

Here's a list of just 10 things that have been achieved in public health in recent decades:

1. **increases in life expectancy**

since 1981, life expectancy for men in England has increased from 70.9 years to 79.4 years?and life expectancy for women has increased from?76.9 years to 83.3 years

2. **reported use of drugs, smoking and alcohol**

in 11-15 year-olds, this has roughly halved between 2003 and 2013

3. **reduction in numbers of people smoking**

eg the ban on smoking in public places is estimated to save the NHS over ?380 million a year

4. **putting fluoride into drinking water**

eg the fluoridation of drinking water has resulted in reduced tooth decay and tooth loss

5. **safer working conditions**

eg wearing of protective equipment and development of policies and methods has promoted safer working practices and reduced workplace accidents

6. **safe food**

eg setting temperature standards for keeping food safe in supermarkets and food outlets

7. **reduced salt targets in food**

eg in bread, cakes, biscuits, breakfast cereals, snacks, pastries, pasta, rice among others

8. **?fewer infectious diseases**

eg typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis (TB)

9. **increased access to family planning?services**

so reducing unwanted pregnancies and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases

10. **increased physical activity**

eg after the 2012 London Olympics, there were a record 15.5 million aged 16 or over playing sport at least once a week - that's 750,000 more than the year before and 1.57 million more than when London won the Olympic ?bid in 2005!

Priorities

Despite these achievements, we continue to tackle many more public health priorities.

Public health priorities aim to improve health (health improvement), protect health (health protection), or improve public health services (healthcare public health). Take a look at some of the examples below or if you'd like to find out more about public health priorities, please visit the public health matters blog [1]?and the?UK government website [2].?

- Health improvement priorities

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Reducing harmful smoking?

- two in 10 adults are smokers
- smoking costs the NHS in the UK ?5.2 billion every year

Reducing obesity and improving diet?

- seven in 10 men and six in 10 women are overweight or obese
- obesity costs the NHS in the UK ?4.2 billion every year

Reducing harmful drinking

- a third of people have drinking patterns that could be harmful
- harmful drinking costs the NHS in the UK ?3.5 billion every year

Improving mental health and tackling dementia

- mental illness is by far the most common illness for people aged 15-44 years
- in 2010, 35.6 million people were estimated to be living with dementia.
- there are estimated to be around 7.7 million new cases of dementia each year, implying that

there is a new case of dementia somewhere in the world every four seconds

- Health protection priorities

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Promoting and administering vaccinations

- it is estimated that vaccination prevents between two and three million deaths worldwide per year. Despite this, influenza still kills 300,000-500,000 people each year.

Tackling the health effects of climate change in the UK

- between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress

Reducing anti-microbial resistance

- drug-resistant tuberculosis has been identified in 92 countries
- gonorrhoea may soon become untreatable as no vaccines or new drugs are in development
- ?Healthcare public health priorities

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By researching, auditing and evaluating the ways in which public health services are currently delivered and their impact it is possible to suggest and implement ways of delivering those services that may result in improved outcomes or cost savings.?

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-public-health/achievements-and-priorities-public-health>

Links

[1] <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/about>