

Influencing local authorities and public health (England)

standing up for dietetics

Dietitians make a difference to patients' lives – their health and quality of life. Our services are also cost effective. Dietitians know this but do the people who are responsible for making decisions about health services in your area know? In the current health system it's now more important than ever to engage locally with key decision makers.

Local Authorities and Public Health in England

How does Public Health work in England?

In 2013, the Department of Health set the National Public Health Outcomes Framework 2013 – 2016 which guides the work of Public Health England (PHE) and enables the government to measure the success of the combined public health work done by PHE, local authorities and Clinical Commissioning groups.

Public Health England (PHE) is the public health adviser to the Department of Health and the NHS England. One of its main functions is to support local authorities in their duty to improve the public's health.

It does this by providing evidence and knowledge of local health needs, alongside practical and professional advice on what to do to improve health and reduce inequalities, and by taking action nationally where it makes sense to do so.

At a more local level public health has been devolved to local authorities (City or County Councils) in which public health teams and Directors of Public Health are now situated. The public health team are responsible for commissioning public health services in their locality.



This is one of a series of fact sheets designed to help you to 'stand up for dietetics' in your local area and influence the decision makers.

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Local Authorities and Public Health in England (cont'd)

Local authorities also host Health and Wellbeing Boards. These are made up of representatives from local NHS, public health, adult social care and children's services, local elected Councillors and Local Healthwatch. Their role is to plan how best to meet the needs of their local population and tackle local inequalities in health. They influence what health services and public health work are commissioned by CCGs.

Local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have equal and joint duties to prepare Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs) for their local population. A team of public health analysts analyses the current and future local health and care needs in order to produce the JSNA. The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and guide the development of the JHWS. The joint health and wellbeing strategy is intended to inform commissioning decisions across local services so that they are focussed on the needs of service users and communities, and tackle the factors that impact upon health and wellbeing across service boundaries .

How can I 'stand up for dietetics'?
All dietitians and not just dietetic managers can influence public health. Your action need not be grand in scale – it will count no matter how small.

Why should dietitians seek to influence Public Health?

Due to the increasing demand and financial pressures on health services the government has now placed a big emphasis on the prevention of ill health and promotion of health and wellbeing. In the NHS Five Year Forward View published in 2014, prevention and public health were made a priority.

Good nutrition and diet has a key role to play on this agenda. Dietitians need to be recognised for their expertise in this area and be seen as the 'go to' professional when nutrition services are being commissioned.

What can I do? Here are some ideas...

-  **Make yourself familiar with the national public health outcomes** - how can you and your service help to deliver the outcomes?
-  **Read your local JSNA and JHWS** – available on local authority websites. Where does your service fit in and how are you helping to deliver on the outcomes? What else could you do to add value and make a difference?
-  **Contact your local JSNA analyst team** and find out whether you can help shape what is included in the JSNA data collection set e.g. lobby for a new nutritional indicator e.g. make the case for the importance of breastfeeding / nutritional screening / vitamin D supplementation
-  **Develop an 'elevator pitch'** describing how dietitians are helping to achieve the JHWS and can do more. Find out who is on your local Health and Wellbeing Board - is there anyone you can contact with your elevator pitch?
-  **Attend a local Health and Wellbeing Board open meeting** - as an observer and you may be able to table a question, develop helpful relationships with your local Director of Public Health and the public health team.
-  **Work with other AHPs, voluntary organisations and patient groups if you share a project** – joint services are encouraged
-  **Get involved in preventative work within your own organisation** e.g. 'Making every contact count' and workplace wellbeing.