

# A Quick Guide to A Councillors' Role in Public Health

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**North West  
Employers**

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## A Councillors' Role in Public Health

The current proposals for reforming the NHS will mean that the role of local government in public health will increase significantly. Consequently, this has specific implications for the councillors' role here.

This quick guide begins with a brief introduction to public health and then examines how the new arrangements will affect councillors.



### Public Health at a Glance

In essence, public health is concerned with preventing disease, prolonging life, promoting healthier lifestyles and reducing health inequalities. As such, public health operates across five domains with a view to achieving these aims:

1. **Health protection and resilience** - protecting the population's health from major emergencies and ensuring they remain resilient to harm.
2. **Tackling the wider determinants of health** - addressing the social and economic factors which affect health and wellbeing.
3. **Health improvement** - helping people to live healthy lifestyles and make healthy choices.
4. **Prevention of ill health** - reducing the number of people living with preventable ill health and reducing inequalities in preventable ill health.
5. **Healthy life expectancy and preventable mortality** - preventing people from dying prematurely.

Whilst public health professionals work to provide a strong evidence base in order to inform policies that promote health and wellbeing, there are a number of additional groups and individuals involved in the public health field who are also working to achieve these improvements within local communities: these include councillors, local government officers, community organisations and communities themselves.

Moreover, there are a number of different service providers involved in improving the population's health. Particularly important here is the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS), which is a crucial partner in supporting, advocating and involving people at local levels to empower and engage them in making decisions that affect their health and wellbeing.



### Spotlight on the Councillors' Role

Given the new health reform proposals, councillors' opportunities to influence public health will be increased through, for example:

- Involvement in the commissioning of services and programmes that tackle health inequalities and seek to improve the health of communities;
- Promoting cross-council activity in support of health and wellbeing as well as joining up different issues and departments;
- Using public health data and [Joint Strategic Needs Assessments](#) (JSNA) to identify and highlight local priorities;
- Using local knowledge and constituency links to highlight health inequalities, contribute to local health audits and promote health and wellbeing;
- Engaging with a range of partners to improve local health and wellbeing (including GPs, NHS services, the business sector, voluntary, community and faith groups as well as community members themselves);
- Ensuring that the voices of community members are heard in health assessment, planning and decision-making;
- Taking a lead role in scrutiny for better health and wellbeing outcomes;
- Ensuring that the public and patients have a voice in the newly established [HealthWatch](#) forums commissioned by upper tier local authorities;

- Acting as representatives on the emerging Health and Wellbeing Boards;
- Helping accompanying action plans to develop health and wellbeing.

## Useful Links

North West Employers- Health Reform Transition Page

[http://www.nwemployers.org.uk/?page\\_id=1161](http://www.nwemployers.org.uk/?page_id=1161)

Local Government Association- Healthy Communities Resource

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageid=77225>

Centre for Public Scrutiny

Supporting Healthcare and Wellbeing Scrutiny

<http://www.cfps.org.uk/what-we-do/health/>

## North West Employers Supporting Councillors'

North West Employers are developing a number of programmes to support councillors to take on the new responsibilities relating to public health. These include

- [Championing Health in Your Community -A 2 Day Accredited Programme for Councillors](#)
- [A Health and Wellbeing Programme for Lead Councillors](#)

For more information on these and other support North West Employers can provide please contact:

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## Talk to us

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## Talk to each other

Register and start using the regions new virtual communication platform [North West Connex](#) -

[www.nwemployers.org.uk/northwestconnex/](http://www.nwemployers.org.uk/northwestconnex/)

### **Guides in this series:**

A Councillors' Role in Public Health

Health Terminology

Workplace Health

Health Reform

Local Government Terminology

Health Inequalities

Health Literacy

