

Environmental Health (Public Health Reform)

Purpose

This report provides members with an update on progress towards our joint COSLA-SG public health reform programme, and presents draft public health priorities for members' consideration and endorsement.

Summary and Recommendations

COSLA and Scottish Government have committed to a joint programme of public health reform, working in partnership with key stakeholders to develop new public health priorities for Scotland, a new national public health body and to consider local partnership approaches to public health. Part of this programme includes considering options for placing local government environmental health services (EHS) on a more sustainable footing.

HSC Board members previously gave in principle agreement to carrying out a review of local government environmental health services, in partnership with the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SCOEHS) and others. The report presents a proposed scope for the review which includes strategic vision; leadership; demand and resourcing; workforce planning; and future delivery models, and which would be finalised in line with the capacity and resource available to support the review.

There may be opportunities for a review to be delivered as part of joint public health reform work on optimising the specialist public health workforce, and overseen by the jointly-chaired COSLA-SG Programme Board, with final recommendations to come to the HSC Board (or COSLA Leaders if required) for agreement. This would help to ensure work is progressed in line with the whole-system approach to reform envisioned in our design principles.

HSC Board members are invited to:

- i. agree a review of the local government environmental health services should consider the issues outlined at paragraph 8 insofar as resources allow;
- ii. remit COSLA officers to explore opportunities for embedding a review within the public health reform programme's activity on optimising the specialist public health workforce; and
- iii. adopt the position that the output of a review, including any recommendations, should be brought back to the HSC Board (or COSLA Leaders if required) for agreement.

References

Recent previous reports on public health:

- Health and Social Care Board, 1st December, 2017
- Health and Social Care Board, 6th April, 2018
- COSLA Leaders, 27th April, 2018

Environmental Health (Public Health Reform)

Purpose

1. This report provides members with a proposed scope and delivery options for a review of Local Government environmental health services as part of our programme of public health reform. It invites members' views and proposes COSLA officers are remitted to work with partners to take forward members' preferred approach.

Background

2. COSLA and Scottish Government have committed to a joint programme of public health reform, working in partnership with key stakeholders to develop new public health priorities for Scotland, a new national public health body and to consider local partnership approaches to public health. This includes considering current and potential partnership arrangements for the strategic planning and delivery of public health at the national, local and regional levels.
3. Further details regarding the overall programme of reform, including the jointly-agreed design principles which will guide the work, have been the subject of previous reports to the Health and Social Care Board and to COSLA Leaders. This report is concerned with the local government environmental health function in particular, and builds on previous discussions with the HSC Board around the workforce and related challenges which local environmental health services face across Scotland.
4. Environmental health has historically focused on addressing poor standards of housing, sanitation, disease, polluted water supplies, unsafe food and communicable diseases. While we have seen significant improvements in the 'first wave' of public health from the early 1900s onwards, these issues continue to impact on the public's health in different forms. Local EHS work with a range of partners, including the Food Standards Agency, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and NHS. However, the majority of functions are delivered locally, including food safety enforcement, occupational health and safety, environmental monitoring, local air quality, drinking water quality, housing and licensing.
5. Maintenance of environmental health functions are crucial to protecting the public's health across these domains, with failure in any one of these areas presenting significant risk of potentially widespread harm. Furthermore, there is also a key role for EHS in supporting the contribution of wider local government to protecting and improving our communities' health and wellbeing.

Current COSLA position

6. At its meeting of 1st December 2017, the Health and Social Care Board gave in principle agreement to a review of local government environmental health services, to be undertaken in partnership with the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SCOEHS). The Board requested that a more detailed paper be brought, outlining the purpose, scope and delivery method for the proposed review. The remainder of this paper presents proposals for members' consideration.

What is changing?

7. Local authorities' environmental health functions have been identified as vulnerable to particular system pressures, including reductions to the workforce over the past 10 years, with large numbers of the remaining workforce approaching retirement age, and difficulties

attracting students and recruiting new staff. These pressures are leading to concerns about sustainability which may need to be addressed differently into the future. Moreover, there are further risks to our ambitions for public health reform in the form of opportunity costs if environmental health does not have the capacity to realise its full potential – particularly in terms of contributing to the full range of Scotland’s public health priorities, supporting other council services and partners to contribute, and helping to re-orient the wider public health system to be more local-facing.

Review purpose and scope

8. SOCOEHS, in partnership with the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS) and the Improvement Service (IS), have considered these challenges in depth and have committed to working in partnership with COSLA and the Scottish Government to review the environmental health function. The purpose of such a review would be to consider options for addressing challenges to the longer-term sustainability of the service and for securing and maximising its contribution to the wider public health agenda and outcomes. Key issues for inclusion in the scope of a review include (but need not necessarily be limited to) the following:

- i. Strategic Vision – articulating a clear strategic vision for environmental health in Scotland, including its current and future profile and contribution to the public’s health and wellbeing, and to the wider public health reform agenda.
- ii. National leadership for environmental health – including consideration of models in use in other parts of the UK, such as national Chief Environmental Health Officer / Adviser roles, and the potential contribution of the new public health body
- iii. Demand and resource – historic and projected demand and resource profiles, including the likely resource gap if new models of delivery are not developed. This will need to include consideration of the likely impact of Brexit and the ‘de’ and ‘re’ regulation that follows
- iv. Workforce planning and development – current and projected, workforce requirements going forwards and options for addressing associated challenges, including the workforce required to implement any future delivery models
- v. Future delivery models – options for remodelling services to meet current and future challenges and deliver the strategic vision for environmental health. This would include (but need not be limited to) ways in which the new public health body could serve and strengthen existing local capacity; opportunities for closer collaboration and sharing of resources across authorities; regional or national configuration of service elements.

Delivery and governance

9. HSC Board members agreed in December that a review would be carried out in partnership with the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SCOEHS), COSLA, the Scottish Government, the Improvement Service, and any external expertise required. In taking this forward, it will be important to ensure sufficient capacity to undertake the work and, depending on the resources available, it may not be possible to consider all of the issues outlined above. In practice, it may be expedient to draw upon work already underway – for example through SOCOEHS’s workforce strategy group, and to explore whether opportunities exist for embedding work within the public health reform programme’s commissioned activity, one strand of which is considering options for optimising the specialist public health workforce.

10. The approach outlined above would have the added advantage of helping to secure the whole-system approach to reform envisioned in our design principles, and COSLA, IS and others are already committed to engaging the work of the commissions. However, local government would need to retain decision-making authority in terms of agreeing and

responding to any review recommendations, given councils' statutory responsibility for environmental health. It is therefore proposed that, should members be minded to agree to exploring this option further, governance would be through the jointly-chaired COSLA-SG Public Health Programme Board (working with SOCOEHS) in the first instance, with a final report and any recommendations being submitted for agreement to COSLA's HSC Board (and COSLA Leaders if required).

Proposed COSLA position

11. There is a need to consider the future sustainability of environmental health services (EHS) in Scotland as part of our wide programme of public health reform if we are to secure the delivery of public health priorities into the future. Opportunities exist to increase the profile of environmental health and ensure the challenges facing EHS are considered as part of connected public health reform work. It is therefore proposed that COSLA adopts the position that, depending on the resources available, a review of EHS should consider the issues outlined at paragraph 8 above, and be considered as part of a whole-system approach to optimising the specialist public health workforce.

Next Steps

12. Views from the HSC Board will be fed back to the joint COSLA-SG Programme Board and COSLA officers will ensure they are reflected and responded to as the review of EHS is developed. Next steps will be agreeing a fully-developed scope, including timescales, for the review and forming a small working group to take this forward. It is envisioned reporting will be through SOCOEHS and the joint Public Health Programme Board, with final proposals coming to HSC Board members (and COSLA Leaders if required).

Summary and recommendations

13. COSLA and Scottish Government have committed to a joint programme of public health reform, working in partnership with key stakeholders to develop new public health priorities for Scotland, a new national public health body and to consider local partnership approaches to public health. Part of this programme includes considering options for placing EHS on a more sustainable footing.

14. HSC Board members previously gave in principle agreement to carrying out a review of local government environmental health services, in partnership with the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SCOEHS) and others such as the Improvement Service (IS) if capacity allows. The report presents a proposed scope for the review which includes strategic vision; leadership; demand and resourcing; workforce planning; and future delivery models, and which would be finalised in line with the capacity and resource available to support the review.

15. There may be opportunities for a review to be delivered as part of joint public health reform work on optimising the specialist public health workforce, and overseen by the jointly-chaired COSLA-SG Programme Board, with final recommendations to come to the HSC Board (or COSLA Leaders if required) for agreement. The Improvement Service will be involved in scoping this with COSLA. This would help ensure work is progressed in line with the whole-system approach to reform envisioned in our design principles

16. HSC Board members are invited to:

- i. agree a review local government environmental health services should consider the issues outlined at paragraph 8 insofar as resources allow;
- ii. remit COSLA officers to explore opportunities for embedding a review within the public health reform programme's work on optimising the specialist public health workforce;

- iii. adopt the position that the output of a review, including any recommendations, should be brought back to the HSC Board (or COSLA Leaders if required) for agreement.

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