

Appendix 4: Worcestershire County council response to consultation on the national reduction in the public health ring-fenced

Worcestershire County Council is extremely concerned about the proposal to reduce the public health ring-fenced grant (PHRFG).

First of all this violates the new burdens doctrine: the Council inherited new duties for public health in April 2013 and this funding was transferred to support them. We have not had a change in these duties, so would not expect a reduction in funding.

Secondly this seems at odds with the government's expressed desire to strengthen prevention in order to reduce health and social care demand. Whilst the Council will do its best to mitigate the impact of any reduction in the PHRFG, there is a risk that reducing investment in prevention could increase demand elsewhere in the system. This is particularly a risk for the local NHS. We would be interested in establishing whether any of the £8bn increase in NHS funding will be earmarked for prevention in order to compensate for any reduction in the PHRFG.

Finally the proposal is to reduce the PHRFG in 2015/16. The Council would normally expect reasonable notice of a reduction in government funding so that we are able to prepare for and manage this within our annual planning cycle. Without this the challenge of making this level of savings becomes even more daunting.