

Health and Well-being Board 30 September 2015

Public Health Ring Fenced Grant

Appendix 3: 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.

In response to the specific questions in the consultation document

Question 1: How should DH spread the £200 million saving across the LAs involved?

We would prefer C. Reduce every LA's allocation by a standard, flat rate percentage. This is because it is the simplest way of applying the reduction.

Question 2: How can DH, PHE and NHS England help LAs to implement the saving and minimise any possible disruption to services?

We think that the most important thing is to be clear as soon as possible about reductions and the level of the grant in future so that local authorities have some certainty on which to base long term planning.

Question 3: How best can DH assess and understand the impact of the saving?

We suggest that DH commission PHE centre directors to review the local impact in order to minimise the burden on local authorities and ensure a consistent approach.