PHI UK | Local Health and Global Profits
Protecting people, place and equity

Local Health, Global Profits: Briefing for Policymakers

Summary

- A healthy and prosperous nation will support the government's dual ambitions of a fairer society and economic growth.
- LHGP is a new research consortium that aims to explore and provide new evidence on the effective approaches that can improve public health at a local level.

Overview

A wide range of factors influence people's health. Until recently the role that some businesses play in shaping public health has been largely absent from how we think about the building blocks of health. Businesses can have a positive impact on health, such as providing jobs and boosting the economy at the national and local level. But some types of businesses have a disproportionately negative impact on our health, particularly those that manufacture, market and sell products that can be harmful to health. At least a third of preventable deaths globally are directly linked to just four products: tobacco, ultra-processed foods, alcohol and fossil fuels.[1]

Existing research tells us that the most effective and equitable actions to improve people's health are "upstream" of the individual, such as regulations that shape our environments rather than those that rely on people deciding to change their behaviour, even when their environments constrain the types of choices they can make.[2]

LHGP is a research consortium working with local governments and civil society groups to map the local systems that affect communities' health, with a particular focus on the commercial, social, economic, and political factors. We will use these 'systems maps' alongside evidence reviews to develop, implement, and evaluate population-level actions to improve health and reduce inequalities. Our researchers are working closely with eight local authority areas in England to do this.

Relevance of LHGP's research to UK policymakers

- The UK Government's health mission sets out an ambition to secure 'a fairer Britain where everyone lives well for longer' with a shift to preventing illness by tackling the causes of ill health, taking pressure off the NHS.
- Preventable illness is hampering government efforts to grow the economy. Initiatives to address health harms can improve productivity.[3]

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[1] WHO blames tobacco, processed food, fossil fuel, and alcohol industries for 2.7m deaths a year in Europe. *BMJ* 2024;385:q1298.
[2] Carey G, Crammond B. Systems change for the social determinants of health. *BMC Public Health* (2015). doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1979-8
[3] Beshir HA, Fichera E. "And breathe normally": Impacts of low emission zones on sick leave and mental well-being. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* (2025). doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2025.106994

- Globally, innovation often emerges at the local level, with lessons informing national policy and building momentum for action to improve health, while a stronger understanding of how local places can improve health supports the government's ambition to deepen devolution.

What can LGHP bring to policymakers?

- New evidence to strengthen the case for policy interventions to improve public health and create healthier environments;
- Expert knowledge and capacity on existing evidence on the varying role different types of businesses play in shaping health to feed into relevant policy development processes;
- New resources and tools to help facilitate local areas to take action;
- Opportunities to feed insights into research and resource development;
- Webinars, conferences to share evidence, insights and practices.

Aims of LHGP

LHGP's research is mapping the whole local system that affects communities' health. The aim is to develop, implement and evaluate population-level actions to tackle harmful commercial factors, driving improvements in health and reductions in health inequalities.

LHGP is made up of different work packages that all contribute to:

- Developing the evidence, tools and data on commercial, social, political and economic factors that influence health and wellbeing at a local level;
- Identifying, implementing and evaluating effective population-level actions, with a focus on learning from previous local authority actions;
- Developing and sharing the knowledge and resources to support other local authorities in the future;
- Partnership work with eight local authority areas in England to develop the evidence base, actions and knowledge sharing resources, along with building capacity in the public health workforce at a local level.

How to get involved:

For the latest news from the LHGP research consortium, as well as updates from across the wider determinants of health landscape, sign-up to our newsletter or follow us on social media.

- LHGP LinkedIn
- LHGP Bluesky
- LHGP Newsletter sign-up

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LHGP is part of the Population Health Improvement UK initiative, funded by UK Research and Innovation. LHGP does not accept funding from commercial entities whose interests are not aligned with our aim of improving public health.