

## Prevention is better than cure

**Building capacity to research what does and doesn't work to improve the health of the public**

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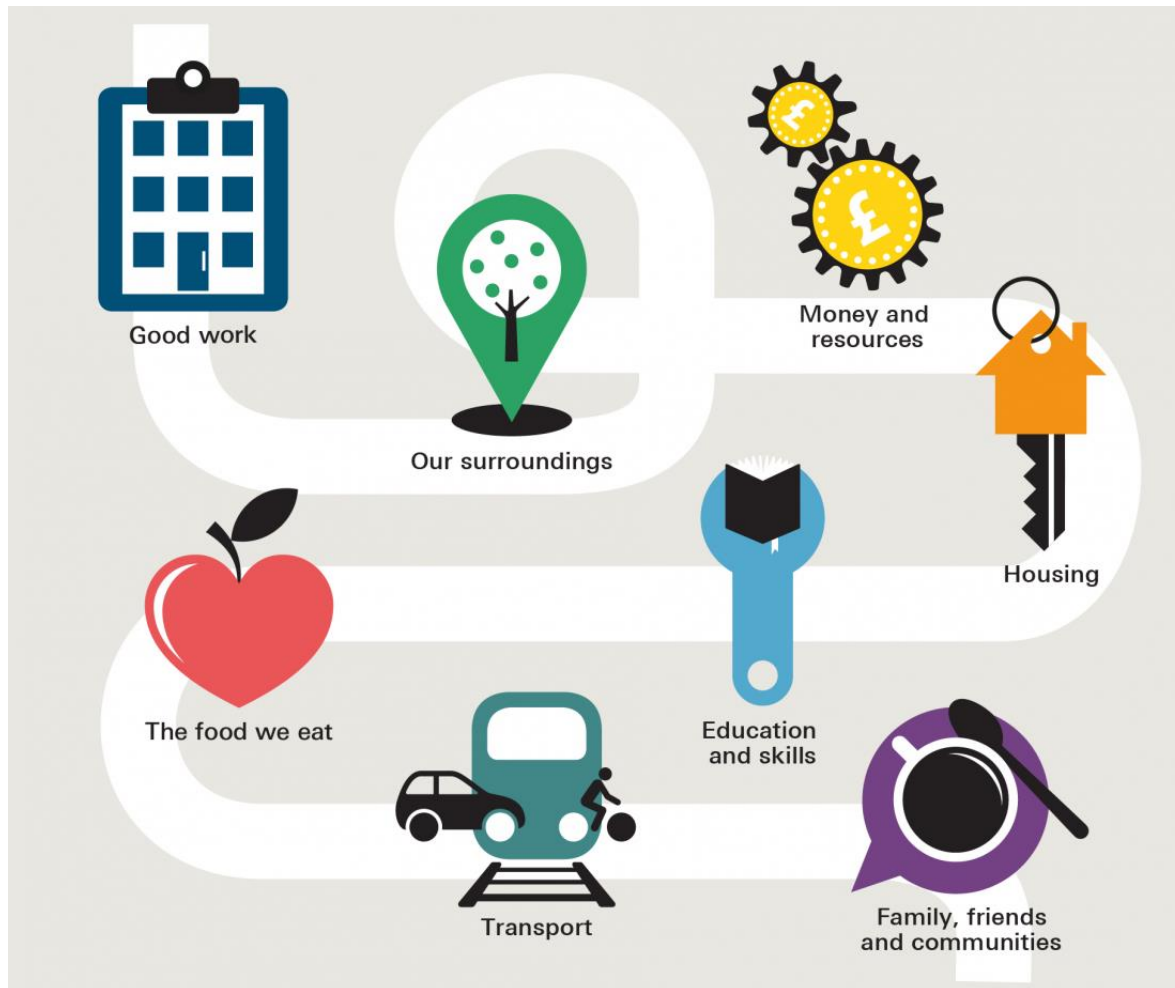
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# What determines the health of the population?



Health of the public largely determined by factors that are nothing to do with the health service

Infographic source: The Health Foundation

# Since the Health and Social Care Act 2012....

- Local government took over responsibility for health of the public – and therefore prevention – from NHS
- Implications for public health research
  - Research culture
  - Research support
  - Drivers of activity and change
  - Funding

# Local government has primary responsibility for health

- profoundly influences the determinants of health
- best-placed to tackle unhealthy infrastructure, environment, opportunity etc and thereby health
- but evidence base weak

# NIHR funding to address the slim evidence base

- Building up the Public Health Research Programme
- Increasing public health support from
  - Research Design Service
  - Clinical Research Network
- Public Health Intervention Responsive Teams
- ‘Local Authority Research System’ projects funded in 2020 (n=14)

# Building a health and wellbeing research system for Kent and Medway 2020

## Aims

- Understand current research culture and capacity in local government
- Identify system barriers to developing research culture and capacity
- Develop ideas and engagement for a health and wellbeing research system

# Methods

- Online survey of council officers and councillors (n=384)
- In-depth interviews with council officers (n=14)
- Analysis of notes from meetings with public health and the public
- Consensus workshop – 20 council officers, NHS managers, voluntary sector, members of the public

# Key findings – councillors and council officers

- most agreed that
  - using research evidence can improve decision-making and value for the public
  - local government should contribute to the evidence base about what works (and doesn't)
- Council officers
  - very positive attitudes to using and participating in research
  - high level of skills
  - limited time in working day



# Key findings – other parts of the system

- Strong support doing more research from members of the public
- NIHR research programmes and ways of working in academia not practitioner friendly
- Universities do not have research resource or infrastructure to support research in local government – funding has to be bid for

# Recommendations: national

- Promote national support for research as core local government function
- Reinforce independent advocate role of Director of Public Health – to follow the science
- Reinforce the idea that practitioners ideally placed to shape and deliver impactful research
- Shape NIHR funding to local government

# Recommendations: local

- Build stronger network of practitioner and academic collaborations through ARC KSS
- Build a compelling case for more research in local government in Kent and Medway

# What happened next - national

- funding for public health researchers embedded in local government
- national funding for 'out of hospital' research support
- NIHR call to bid for 'Health Determinants Research Collaborations' Autumn 2021
  - To provide infrastructure for research to promote and improve health in local government

# What happened next - KSS

- embedded researcher KCC 2021-2023
  - providing information
  - supporting research projects
  - raising profile of public health research
- Public health network supported by ARC KSS 2021

# Public health network - aims

Develop, across the public health community

- Research **culture** – inclusive and stimulating debate
- Research **capacity**
- More research **participation** among local government practitioners
- Research **impact** – prevention of ill health in KSS and beyond

# Public health network - how we will achieve this

- Disseminate intelligence about research opportunities and the research environment
- Provide opportunities for
  - building relationships leading to creative collaborations and delivery
  - sharing and testing research ideas, about questions, methods and dissemination
- Provide professional development resource

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- NIHR Public Health Research Programme
- KSS ARC

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