



Local government reorganisation and environmental health

Environmental health is public health in real life. It operates where people live, work and interact – ensuring homes are safer, air is breathable, food is safer and communities are protected from harm. It is one of the few local authority functions that simultaneously supports public health, economic growth and the environment, and can reduce demand on emergency services.

Why this matters now:

Local government reorganisation across England is reshaping structures, responsibilities and leadership. We have an opportunity to make more of environmental health's ability to deliver public health improvements, through its focus on prevention and early intervention, scientific approach, local delivery footprint and regulatory duties. Local government reorganisation invites system leaders to treat environmental health as a **strategic public health asset**, and to embed it as a **core delivery mechanism across prevention, protection and place**.

What environmental health delivers:

- Prevents illness, injury and risk before escalation
- Advises on, encourages and enforces standards, holding duty-holders accountable
- Works across systems: housing standards, food safety, workplaces, pollution, communities
- Delivers cost-effective population health impact

Why leaders should care:

- 30,000 deaths each year from air pollution
- 1.2 million fly-tipping incidents annually in England alone
- £10.4bn cost of foodborne disease
- £22bn annual cost of workplace ill health
- £1bn annual NHS cost to treat those affected by poor housing

What you should do (priority actions):

- Embed environmental health in place-based system leadership
- Strengthen prevention-led regulatory approaches
- Invest in workforce capacity and resilience
- Align environmental health with housing, food safety, planning and similar functions
- Recognise environmental health as a core public health function

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