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Councillor

*Graham Cain*

Cabinet Secretary – Resilient Communities  
Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board  
Bloomfield Ward Councillor

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Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Department of Health  
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Date: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Dear Mr Hunt,

**OPPOSITION AGAINST PUBLIC HEALTH RING-FENCED FUNDING REDUCTION**

On 5 June 2015, the Government announced a further £3 billion of spending cuts to the current financial year. This included the Department for Health reducing its spending on public health grants to local authorities by £200 million. At the same time, the NHS budget continued to be safeguarded.

The decision to reduce funding for public health has come as a big surprise, not least because the budget for 2015/16 was only announced by Central Government 6 months ago. There has been no indication from the Government prior to 5 June that such a proposal was being considered, and Blackpool has successfully set a balanced budget, including full allocation of the Public Health Grant in 2015/16 based on the information provided by the Government in the Local Government finance settlements, and reiterated by the Chancellor in March's budget.

Therefore, the Chancellor's announcement – within mere weeks – that the 2015/16 Public Health Grant allocations would be re-opened and be reduced by a further £200m to contribute to the Government's national deficit is badly planned, ill-timed and potentially life-threatening.

These cuts are even more surprising given the Government's commitment to the NHS Five Year Forward View, which has prevention as a key element. Prevention is absolutely crucial if we are to overcome the major public health challenges of smoking, obesity and physical inactivity, and we must accept that prevention costs money upfront. Investment in weight management programmes, in smoking cessation services, in physical activity schemes will save money in the long-term by reducing the demand on the NHS and social care.

Public Health funding is vital to taking a preventative approach to health, and without it we risk overloading the NHS further. Investment in such programmes is essential to reduce the burden of preventable disease on the NHS.

The transfer in responsibility of public health services was a fundamental change to the role of Local Government. It is essential that the Government ensures that this responsibility remains fully funded, and that any proposals regarding its distribution are fair and transparent.

The Statutory agencies (NHS, Council, Police, Fire & Rescue) and Voluntary Sector members of the Health and Wellbeing Board firmly believe that it is more important than ever that the distribution of available resources reflects the assessed needs of areas (i.e. levels of deprivation) and the ability to raise resources. Unfortunately, the latest announcement follows those of the past four years with the greatest impact of the cuts likely to affect the most deprived authorities, such as Blackpool, the most.

Given the recent announcement, the Blackpool Health and Wellbeing Board is extremely concerned about how the Public Health grant will be treated in the forthcoming Emergency Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review, and in any future allocation formula.

The Blackpool Health and Wellbeing Board calls upon the Government to:-

- (i) re-consider its short-sighted and contradictory approach to the proposed cut in public health funding, when in actual fact it should invest more in prevention and health improvement, with allocations based upon need; and
- (ii) honour its previous commitments as set out in the local government finance settlement in March 2015.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Cain', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Councillor Graham Cain**  
**Cabinet Secretary – Resilient Communities**  
**Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board**