

29th April 2014

To: Health and Wellbeing Chairs and Members

In the last year, public health has undergone some of the biggest changes in generations. Our public health reforms have radically shifted power to local authorities, empowering them to invest and innovate to improve the health of their communities. I am confident that local communities are best placed to respond to local needs.

To mark the first anniversary of the birth of this new system and the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards, I wanted to write to you to thank you for all your hard work to for improve your local population's health in creative and innovative ways. I also want to highlight some of my priorities and recent work in and out of Parliament, as well as some of the public health issues that have been of particular interest to my parliamentary colleagues in recent months.

Recognising local excellence in promoting health and wellbeing

The public health changes we have seen over the last year are unleashing great creativity and local innovation as, local leaders rise to the challenges they face in their area.

I wanted to recognise, in Parliament, those people that have gone the extra mile to change the world around them for the better. That is why earlier this month I hosted a celebration event, in Parliament, to recognise those people who have been working hard to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the people in their area.

It was fantastic to meet so many dedicated individuals at the event and to hear of the diverse and exciting initiatives and projects that people are engaged in such as the Wisbech Market Stall Project which provides health information such as advice about

diet and alcohol through a market stall or the ‘Lose Weight Feel Great’ initiative at Wigan Borough Council which helped 8000 people to lose weight.

The response to the call for nominations and attendance at the event was superb, reflecting the level of pride and ambition in around the country. I was heartened to see that some MPs put forward the people they know are making a difference in their constituency.

I hope that the event will serve to inspire the next wave of public health heroes and I look forward to hearing more about their achievements. You can download the summary booklet featuring all the nominated individuals and groups from www.dh.gsi.gov.uk. I would also be very interested to hear from you about innovative examples of public health work going on in your area, so please do contact me at publichealth.minister@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Tackling TB

The Collaborative Tuberculosis Strategy for England 2014 to 2019 was launched for consultation at a well-attended meeting organised by the All Party Parliamentary Group on TB in Parliament on 24 March 2014. The Strategy aims to learn from successful TB control programmes internationally, and adapt the learning to our specific epidemiological situation and health care structures.

The focus is to build on the assets already in the NHS and the public health system, to support and strengthen local services in tackling TB in areas of high incidence, to ensure clear lines of accountability and responsibility throughout, and to provide national support for local action.

The Department will continue to support Public Health England in giving national policy leadership, ensuring that there is a co-ordinated approach to TB. If you would like to read the strategy and/or take part in the consultation you will find it [here](#).

FGM

As some of you may know, before becoming Public Health Minister, I campaigned strongly against female genital mutilation (FGM), setting up the All Party Parliamentary Group on FGM. Since taking office, I have been taking action to ensure health services do all they can to combat this illegal and abusive practice.

Since 1 April 2014, all healthcare professionals are now required to record in a patient’s healthcare record if it is identified that she has FGM. All professionals including GPs, hospital doctors, nurses, and midwives must follow this, across all healthcare sectors with immediate effect. We have done this by introducing a new

information standard. This also requires that all Acute NHS Trusts (Foundation and Non-Foundation) must report to the Department of Health on the prevalence of FGM within their patient population, and the total number of patients who have been treated for FGM. The monthly collection must be implemented by September 2014.

All queries on this and the wider programme of work can be directed to FGM@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Can I also take this opportunity to remind you that if any frontline staff identify a child they consider to be at risk of FGM, or who has already undergone FGM, they must respond appropriately by involving social services and/or the police.

I have urged the NHS to ensure the information standard is implemented in their organisation with immediate effect. They should review the [Multi-Agency Guidelines](#) to ensure their organisation is meeting the responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and to engage with the FGM Prevention programme as further standards, activities, improved training and other measures are introduced. I think it is of particular note that all NHS healthcare providers are now involved in the recording of FGM within personal healthcare records, so would encourage you to circulate this through staff communication cascades.

I would also ask that you consider whether this is a matter that needs attention in your area and whether it needs to be considered as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The Multi-Agency Guidelines provide useful information about practising communities, prevalence etc that should assist you in this regard.

PUBLIC HEALTH IN PARLIAMENT ROUND UP

Headsmart campaign on brain tumours in children

An important awareness campaign, Headsmart, has been raised with me a number of times recently in Parliament to promote the early diagnosis of brain tumours in children. Last year there was a full debate stimulated by a successful e-petition. A key part of the campaign is the distribution of pocket sized awareness cards and I would ask that you look at how best these could be deployed in your area. Some local authorities, for example, have circulated them to schools.

As well as improving the chances of survival, early diagnosis reduces the likelihood of a child or young person with the disease developing a long-term disability.

The campaign has a dedicated website <http://www.headsmart.org.uk> which provides a range of materials on symptoms of brain tumours in children and teenagers for the public and for health professionals, including the pocket size awareness cards.

Public Health England has also agreed to contact all directors of public health about the campaign, which is also funding research into this condition.

Debates on cancer

Over the last few months, there has been a great deal of parliamentary interest and debate about cancer services. The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Cancer has recently published a report into cancer services, which includes recommendations for every level of the NHS. I will be responding to the APPG formally on the recommendations for this Department, but you may wish to consider its recommendations for your areas. You can read the report [here](#).

I have also responded to a number of debates on different types of cancer. The overarching theme between each case has been the overwhelming importance of the patient experience, and often the ‘non-medical’ aspects of caring for people. I am pleased that the annual Cancer Patient Experience survey is continuing to provide excellent feedback to trusts and commissioners, and I would urge you to consider all of its suggestions about how individual local services can give patients the best possible care.

I’d also like to make you aware that we’re running a range of regional “be clear on cancer” campaigns this year and during 2015, as well as our rolling national campaigns. These are great opportunities to consider how they could work in your area or complement local activity, you may be planning. For more information, [click here](#).

Let’s get physical

In February, the Government published ‘Moving More, Living More – the Olympic and Paralympic Physical Activity Legacy for the Nation’. Getting the nation to engage in more physical activity is a key priority for this Government. Healthy, active lifestyles not only benefit the individual by reducing the likelihood of developing over 20 chronic conditions, including coronary heart disease and stroke, but they can also contribute to the community as a whole. I am especially conscious of the positive role physical activity can play in tackling social isolation.

We all have a role to play in helping people to exercise more, and it is in the collective power of Health and Wellbeing Boards’ to bring together public health commissioners, the NHS and local authorities to achieve this ambition. Public Health England is currently running a national consultation to develop its National Implementation Framework for Physical Activity. When finished, this document will provide advice and examples of good practice in how to design physical activity back into everyday life. More information on the consultation can

be found at www.gov.uk by searching for 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People: our strategy for public health in England', and I would encourage your Health and Wellbeing Board to take part in it. The interim consultation summary will be published in the autumn with the intention of helping LA's plan for 2015/16.

Delivering on the promise of the new public health system

We still see stark and stubborn differences in the health and wellbeing of people depending on where they live in the country and their social economic background. There is a wealth of data that shows in detail key health and wellbeing indicators broken down by local authority areas. This data should serve as a driver to implement local solutions to address particular local problems, for example on obesity or smoking. Your Director of Public Health and PHE Director can assist you in accessing this information.

I truly believe that although national action and legislation plays an important part in some key areas of improving public health, such as tobacco control, giving local authorities the mandate and money to design and deliver public health initiatives locally is the right approach. I have already heard and seen fantastic local examples, up and down the country. However, if 2013-14 was about embedding the new public health system and building up strong relationships, the real test this year will be measurable, real and sustained improvements in local public health outcomes for people within their communities. I wish you every success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Ellison". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

JANE ELLISON MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH