



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive
Public Health England
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22nd March 2019

Dear Duncan,

I would like to thank all the people in Public Health England (PHE) who have worked so hard and successfully in establishing PHE as a national public health agency of global standing and for continuing to protect and improve the public's health.

2019/20 is an important transition year, both in making a successful exit from the European Union (EU) and continuing to improve health outcomes – including through follow-up to the Government's strategy "Prevention is better than cure" and delivery of the prevention commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan.

This letter sets out PHE's role across the health and care system, the Government's priorities of PHE from April 2019 to March 2020, and reporting arrangements.

PHE's role

As an Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) with operational autonomy, the Government expects PHE, as set out in the Framework Agreement, to be an authoritative voice on public health. PHE's scientists, public health professionals and operational experts provide expert knowledge, information and a strong credible evidence base, including through research, to support local and national services, inform Government policy, improve outcomes, reduce health inequalities and protect the health of the nation.

PHE will continue to work in collaboration with DHSC and all our delivery partner organisations on the consequences of leaving the EU on the health and care system. Alongside DHSC and the Arm's Length Bodies across the health and care system, PHE has a major role in supporting the system to maintain and improve outcomes and to live within its means.



PHE's Business Plan will reflect the priorities highlighted in this letter and PHE's Strategic Plan, as well as other programmes of work that are critical to improving and protecting health and reducing health inequalities.

More detail on PHE's role, and how PHE will provide leadership across the system, is set out at Annex A.

Priorities for 2019/20

In 2019/20, the Government expects PHE to focus in particular on implementation of the following **public health priorities**:

Leaving the EU

- Lead on public health security and protection from serious cross-border threats to health. PHE will ensure its preparedness to respond to, and co-ordinate the response to, public health emergencies and management of incidents, including those caused by disruption at the border and of the supply chain. This includes ensuring continuity of access to nationally procured vaccines, countermeasures supply and public health laboratory functions.
- Continue to develop strategic engagement with European Public Health Institutes and multi-agency public health agencies, to maintain close working relationships with these organisations after leaving the EU.
- Collaborate with the DHSC Operational Response Centre by providing information, advice and data.

Prevention Green Paper

- Support DHSC to develop and publish a Green Paper on prevention by providing robust analysis and evidence on interventions to prevent ill health and reduce health inequalities; and support engagement with local and national partners both prior to and following publication.

Predictive Prevention

- Build on PHE's industry-leading expertise in targeted, personalised and digitally enabled social marketing to develop with system-wide partners an accelerated approach to testing and learning from innovative predictive prevention interventions which impact at population and individual level.



Childhood Obesity

- Deliver PHE's contribution towards the government's commitment to halve childhood obesity by 2030, including: working with industry on the sugar reduction and calorie reduction programmes; revising the nutrient profile model; supporting delivery of the obesity related approaches in the NHS Long Term Plan; and leading on a programme of reformulation work to significantly reduce the population's salt intake.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

- Implement the PHE-led actions in the UK AMR National Action Plan, and support DHSC to deliver the UK global AMR related commitments including the Global Burden of Disease project.

Screening

- Implement relevant recommendations from the Independent Breast Screening Review; the Public Accounts Committee report on the management of adult health screening; and agreed recommendations from Professor Sir Mike Richards' review of national cancer screening programmes.

Immunisation

- Support NHS England in improving childhood vaccination uptake and the planning and delivery of an extension of the Human papilloma virus vaccination programme to eligible adolescent boys.

Smoking

- Deliver the PHE-led actions in the Tobacco Control Plan Delivery Plan and work with NHS England to realise their smoking-related commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

- Support the commissioning and delivery of services, to reduce variations in outcomes for reproductive and sexual health and HIV across England, and support NHS England and local government in the PrEP Impact Trial.

Mental Health

- Promote good mental health, prevent mental health problems and improve the lives of people living with and recovering from mental illness, including delivering a national campaign to encourage and empower people to look after their mental



health in support of the target to engage and improve the mental health literacy of one million people.

Health & Work

- Support the delivery of the Government's strategy set out in 'Improving Lives: The Future of Work, Health and Disability' by working with local government and the NHS on mainstreaming "work as a health outcome" products across local health and care systems and collaborating in the development of work-focused musculo-skeletal prevention activity.

Healthy Child Programme

- As part of modernising the Healthy Child Programme initially focussed on the first 1001 days and early years, PHE will produce a pre-conception and maternity pathway to reduce risk and improve wellbeing, and publish a speech, language and communication pathway to improve outcomes for children and reduce inequality in school readiness.

Future funding and assurance arrangements

- Support DHSC in preparations for the 2019 Spending Review, including by providing evidence on the impact of investment in services which improve and protect the public's health. Continue to work with DHSC to develop an appropriate assurance framework for the public health system, alongside other developments in local government financing.

PHE Harlow

- Submit a robust Full Programme Business Case to DHSC for approval to create a new national campus for public health science.

Work across Government

In fulfilling its role to improve and protect the public's health, PHE will make important contributions to the development and implementation of a number of government programmes in 2019/20, particularly through work to:

- make agreed contributions to cross-government initiatives on the environment including working with Defra to support implementation of the **Clean Air Strategy** with a focus on refining public health messaging and increasing awareness across the system;



- contribute to the **drugs review** commissioned by the Home Secretary and the delivery of key commitments in the Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy; and
- assist local authorities and health commissioners by publishing guidance on improving the health of **rough sleepers** in line with the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping.

Evidence Reviews

Evidence reviews have an important role in reviewing and publishing evidence and support scientific expert committees, to allow faster progress on improving on the public's health. The Government and PHE will assess this requirement in-year.

During the reporting year PHE will complete and publish evidence reviews on the public health impacts associated with prescription drug dependence and gambling.

Reporting

PHE is accountable to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care for delivering or supporting delivery of these priorities. In doing so, PHE will demonstrate how it is acting to reduce health inequalities across its work programmes. Progress against agreed deliverables will be reviewed regularly, including through formal assurance arrangements with the sponsor Director General, allowing progress to be monitored and action taken to address any risks to delivery.

STEVE BRINE



Annex A

PHE's role

PHE is the expert national public health agency which fulfils the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's statutory duties to protect health and address health inequalities, and executes the Secretary of State's power to promote the health and wellbeing of the nation. PHE undertakes a range of evidence-based activities that span the full breadth of public health, working locally, nationally and internationally, and is responsible for four critical functions.

- Fulfil the Secretary of State's duty to **protect the public's health** from infectious diseases and other public health hazards, working with the NHS, local government and other partners in England, and also working with the devolved administrations and globally where appropriate. This means providing the national infrastructure for health protection including: an integrated surveillance system; providing specialist services, such as diagnostic and reference microbiology; developing, translating and exploiting public health science, including developing the application of genomic technologies; work to address antimicrobial resistance; investigation and management of outbreaks of infectious diseases and environmental hazards; ensuring effective emergency preparedness, resilience and response for health emergencies, including global health security; acting as the focal point for the UK on the International Health Regulations; and evaluating the effectiveness of the immunisation programme and procuring and supplying vaccines.
- **Secure improvements to the public's health, including supporting the system to reduce health inequalities** and to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan and the Secretary of State for Health's Prevention Vision commitments for a radical upgrade in prevention. It should do this through its own actions and by supporting government, local government, the NHS and the public to secure the greatest gains in physical and mental health, and help achieve a financially sustainable health and care system. PHE will: promote healthy lifestyles; provide evidence-based, professional, scientific and delivery expertise and advice; develop data, information resources and tools (particularly on return on investment and value for money); and support the system to meet legal duties to improve the public's health and reduce health inequalities.



- **Improve population health by supporting sustainable health and care services** through, for example: promoting the evidence on public health interventions and analysing future demand to help shape future services; working with NHS England on effective preventative strategies and early diagnosis; providing expert advice and support for national and local commissioning and provision of vaccination and screening programmes, including through screening quality assurance and specifically for support for the delivery of an optimal flu vaccination programme; the introduction of new programmes and the extension of existing programmes; running national data collections for a range of conditions, including cancer and rare diseases; supporting local government and the NHS with access to high quality data and providing data analyses to improve services and outcomes.
- Ensure the **public health system maintains the capability and capacity** to tackle today's public health challenges and is prepared for the emerging challenges of the future, both nationally and internationally. This will mean: undertaking research and development and working with partners from the public, academic and private sectors to improve the research landscape for public health; supporting and developing a skilled workforce for public health; supporting local government to improve the performance of its functions; providing the professional advice, expertise and public health evidence to support the development of public policies to have the best impact on improving health and reducing health inequalities; and collecting, quality assuring and publishing timely, user-friendly high-quality information on important public health topics and public health outcomes.

How PHE should perform its role

PHE has a vital public health system leadership role. This is reinforced by PHE's 2018/19 stakeholder review which highlighted that PHE is an evidence based and credible organisation providing vital health protection functions and making a critical contribution through health improvement expertise, intelligence and data.

The Government expects PHE to develop its role with a very clear focus on providing the evidence, support and advice needed locally, nationally and internationally. As the Framework Agreement between DHSC and PHE sets out:

“PHE shall be free to publish and speak out on those issues which relate to the nation's health and wellbeing in order to set out the professional, scientific and



objective judgement of the evidence base. ... Ministers remain responsible and accountable for policy decisions.”

PHE's role requires it to demonstrate expertise in the fields on behavioural science and consumer behaviour, the creation of innovative digital platforms and trialling new approaches. In particular, it will mean PHE as a system leader:

- supporting local government, informed by information on outcomes and return on investment, to support improvements to health, tackle the wider causes of ill health and reduce health inequalities; and demonstrate how it acts on feedback from local government to provide the support it needs;
- furthering its role in supporting the implementation of the prevention commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan and supporting an NHS that embeds prevention in all that it does;
- supporting a whole system approach to protecting the health of the nation, working within the context of a strategic “one government” approach globally;
- developing the evidence on effective interventions to reduce health inequalities and supporting the system, including local government and the NHS, to interpret and implement those interventions with the greatest impact;
- developing, translating and exploiting public health science to protect and improve people's health, including working with partners from the public, academic and private sectors to improve the research landscape for public health;
- supporting the development of the wider public health system, now and in the future, including the current and future workforce, supporting Directors of Public Health in their local leadership role, and delivering savings and prioritising activities with the greatest impact on the public's health in order to support improved value for money;
- working as effectively and efficiently as possible across the public health system to maintain due accountability and oversight, including through the provision of authoritative and accessible evidence, data and advice on system performance;



Department
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*From Steve Brine MP
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- continually learning from bench-marking information and reviews, including international reviews, to strengthen organisational capability and operational effectiveness as well as long-term sustainability and resilience; and
- working effectively with teams in DHSC, ensuring that responsibilities are clear, working methods are efficient and capabilities are matched to expectations.