

**An open letter from Professor John Strang, chair of the clinical guidelines update working group**

17 November 2014

Dear colleagues,

I have been asked by Public Health England to convene and chair an expert group to consider whether an update or review of the 2007 Clinical Guidelines might be useful (and, if so, then to proceed with necessary updating). The 2007 Clinical Guidelines are still highly regarded and so it is essential first of all to establish whether updating or revision will be valuable. The group met for its initial meeting in early October and first considered this question, with discussion between members of the expert group alongside consideration of the responses to the consultation organised by Public Health England and the devolved administrations (from July to September). A substantial majority of the consultation responses received – both in writing and through the focus groups held around the UK – were in favour of an update. However, there was a minority but strongly-expressed concern about the motivation behind the proposed update and a concern that some of the evidence-based treatment supported by the guidelines might be undermined or lost.

The expert group agreed with the majority view from the public consultation and concluded that an update was necessary and desirable, and decided that consequently it would proceed to review the evidence needed to inform an update that will be published by early 2016.

The expert group endorsed the statements in the consultation document that:

*“Much of the advice given in the 2007 guidelines remains current. However, there are sections that could benefit from being updated following developments in the evidence base since the guidelines were published.”*

and

*“An update would build upon the content of the current version to reflect new evidence, issues and ways of working, as well as developments in the recovery orientation of drug treatment (while continuing to support the protective elements of treatment). An update would also seek to complement and supplement other key documents, including NICE guidance and ‘Medications in recovery’.”*

I hope that this gives both reassurance about the process and also a proper understanding of the stimulus for, and objectives of, this planned update.

Yours faithfully,



Professor John Strang  
Chair, Clinical guidelines update working group