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Dear Duncan

PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND STRATEGIC REMIT & PRIORITIES

I would like to thank all the people in PHE who have worked so hard and successfully over the past year to protect and improve the public's health.

This letter sets out the role that the Government expects Public Health England (PHE) to play in the health and care system, how PHE should perform that role, the priorities of PHE April 2017 to March 2018, and reporting arrangements.

PHE's role

PHE is the expert national public health agency which fulfils the Secretary of State for Health'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.

- To 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; 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 and work on antimicrobial resistance; 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.

- To **secure improvements to the public's health, including supporting the system to reduce health inequalities** and to deliver From Evidence into Action and the Five Year Forward View 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.
- To **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 national co-ordination and quality assurance of immunisation and screening programmes, 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; contributing to the 100,000 genomes project; and supporting local government and the NHS with access to high quality data and providing data analyses to improve services and outcomes.
- To 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.

As an Executive Agency of the Department of Health (DH) with operational autonomy, the Government expects PHE, as set out in the Framework Agreement, to be an authoritative voice on public health, providing expert knowledge, information and a strong credible evidence base to support local and national services, inform Government policy and improve outcomes.

PHE's role will continue to evolve as the Government takes forward changes to future local government public health funding, as local government and devolution settlements start to impact locally and as we achieve greater integration between the NHS, social care and public health.

The Tailored Review of PHE confirmed the importance of PHE's role and functions in the system and concluded that it has made good progress with integrating the staff, cultures, working practices and physical assets of the variety of organisations from which it was created, building an organisation that provides quality expert advice. The recommendations, some of which involve the Department of Health, seek to support the continued development and improvement of PHE, including continuing to strengthen organisational capability, long-term sustainability and resilience, and deliver best value.

See annex A for more detail on how PHE will develop its future role as a system leader.

Priorities for 2017/18

The DH refreshed Single Departmental Plan (SDP), sets out the Department's objectives for the health and care system. PHE will have an important role to play in delivery of some of these priorities, working with DH, other ALBs and delivery partners in the health and care system. PHE's Business Plan will reflect the SDP, the NHS Five Year Forward View, the priorities highlighted in this letter, as well as other programmes of work that are critical to improving public health outcomes and reducing health inequalities.

In 2017/18, the Government expects PHE to focus in particular on implementation of the following **public health priorities**.

1. PHE will support the national response to the risk and harm from infectious diseases and environmental hazards, as well as addressing global threats to public health, with a particular focus on:

1a. **Antimicrobial Resistance** – support the Government’s ambition to reduce Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) by working with the NHS, in particular on reducing inappropriate prescribing (including through behaviour change); and reducing healthcare associated Gram negative bloodstream infections; as well as implementing the PHE-led commitments.

1b. **Local health protection** – to protect the public’s health, work with system partners to complete the audit of local health protection arrangements, including the development of a national system to collate and disseminate lessons learnt from incidents.

1c. **High Consequence infectious diseases incidents** – work with Government and NHS England to develop a joint programme of work and production of plans for the public health system’s response to high consequence infectious disease incidents.

1d. **Global Health** – as part of a strategic “one government” approach on global health, to work closely with DH to strengthen the co-ordination of global health activities on infectious disease, environmental hazards and health improvement to protect people living in the United Kingdom, support the development of public health systems, improve capacity and expertise in agreed countries, and implement the global health security agenda.

2. To secure the greatest gains in health and wellbeing, PHE will support the Government, local government and the NHS to build healthy communities and support people to make healthier choices across the life course, with a particular focus on:

2a. **Health inequalities** – support local action to reduce health inequalities, working in partnership with DH, the Local Government Association, NHS England and relevant national bodies.

2b. **Best start in life** – work with local government and health visitors to drive improvements in child health outcomes at scale, assure local delivery of the five 0-5 universal checks (to all children, everywhere) and provide evidence on priority interventions in universal plus and universal partnership plus service; support the development of a strategy to address the needs of children living with alcohol dependent parents; and lead the prevention workstream within the national

Maternity Transformation Programme working across the local NHS and local government.

- 2c. **Obesity** – deliver the programme of work to significantly reduce childhood obesity, by implementing the Sugar Reduction Programme; developing work on salt, fat and total calorie reduction; supporting local delivery including by the wider public health workforce, and working with industry, schools, local government and the NHS.
 - 2d. **Smoking** – implement the PHE-led commitments in the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan, focusing on reducing variation in England and including publication of an updated evidence report on e-cigarettes and novel tobacco products.
 - 2e. **Mental Health** – promote good mental health, prevent mental health problems and improve the lives of people living with and recovering from mental illness, including through implementation of the PHE-led commitments from the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health.
 - 2f. **NHS Health Checks** – work with local government and the NHS to maximise the delivery and outcomes of the NHS Health Check programme.
 - 2g. **Sexual and reproductive health** – implement actions to enhance commissioning of sexual and reproductive health services, focusing on helping delivery organisations reduce the variation in health outcomes in England, as well as supporting NHS England and local government in implementing the PrEP pilot.
3. *PHE will work with the NHS and local government to seek to reduce inequalities and demand on NHS services, improve population health through evidence-based sustainable health and care services, with a particular focus on:*
- 3a. **Prevention and demand management** – make the case for prevention with DH and NHS England and work with the NHS and local government to support local implementation of the NHS Five Year Forward View prevention agenda - particularly on closing the health, financial and quality gaps - to help reduce avoidable increases in demand on the NHS. In particular:
 - supporting the implementation and delivery of *Sustainability and Transformation Plans*, helping NHS and local government commissioners to deliver savings, and to prioritise activities with the greatest impact on the public's health in order to support improved value for money;

- support NHS England in delivering a two year programme, that will promote the *implementation of preventative interventions at scale* by the NHS, in collaboration with local health and care partners; and
- developing proposals to make better use of *behavioural science to help people take more control of their health*, with a focus on increasing uptake of prevention programmes, to reduce demand on the NHS.

4. *To enable the delivery of public health priorities now and in future, PHE will support the development of the public health and NHS system as a whole, with a particular focus on:*

- 4a. **Supporting local delivery** – promote sustained improvement and reduced variation in public health outcomes by supporting local government to deliver effective and efficient public health interventions and services in line with the Public Health Grant conditions and regulations.
- 4b. **New Assurance and Financial Frameworks** – support the development of a new assurance and financial framework for the public health system (greater devolution and a future move from grant funding to 100% Business Rates Retention) promoting transparency of public health outcomes and supporting local accountability and improvement.
- 4c. **Public Health Workforce** – continue to build capability in public health to enable leadership and delivery of the public health priorities now and in future, including taking the lead in implementing “Fit for the Future”.
- 4d. **Tailored Review implementation** – take forward the report recommendations.

Work across Government

In fulfilling its role to improve the public’s health, PHE will make important contributions to the development and implementation of a number of wider Government programmes in 2017/18, particularly on:

- tackling **child sexual abuse and exploitation**;
- addressing **environmental factors** that can pose a risk to public health, including, but not limited to air pollution;
- development of the **Industrial Strategy**;
- implementation of the **Home Office’s Drugs Strategy**; and

- supporting the follow-up to the **Work, Health and Disability green paper**, in particular developing tools and information for employers and the public; and supporting the promotion of both health at work and the importance of work as a health outcome, across all business sectors, local employers, partners and amongst clinicians and the NHS.

Evidence Reviews

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

The Government looks to PHE to develop a strong understanding of the evidence on the contribution of behavioural science in improving health, in helping people taking more control of their own health and in managing demand on the NHS, to inform consideration of new opportunities for action.

Reporting

PHE is accountable to the Secretary of State for Health and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation for delivering or supporting delivery of these priorities. Progress against agreed deliverables will be reviewed regularly, including through formal assurance arrangements with the Director General of Global and Public Health, allowing progress to be monitored and action taken to address any risks to delivery.

PHE will continue to report on health outcomes and on progress across the Public Health Outcomes Framework. In recognition of the need for more timely information to support planning and action locally, PHE will look to report shorter-term public health data.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Best wish" followed by a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola" followed by a horizontal line.

NICOLA BLACKWOOD

cc. Sir Derek Myers

Annex A

PHE has a vital public health system leadership role. This is reinforced by PHE's stakeholder review (2016/17), which highlights a number of strengths such as bringing together the evidence and knowledge. It also underlines the continued need to embed prevention across the system, and for PHE to broaden its support to local government in addressing the particular challenges it faces.

The Government expects PHE to develop its role with a very clear focus on providing the support, information and advice needed locally, nationally and internationally. This includes expertise in the fields on behavioural science and consumer behaviour and trialling and evaluating innovative 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 implementing the NHS Five Year Forward View, to realise the radical upgrade in prevention that is necessary, particularly on closing the health, financial and quality gaps, 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;
- 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
- reshaping working arrangements with teams in DH, so that responsibilities are clear, working methods are efficient and capabilities are matched to expectations.