

Gateway reference number 17490

**3 April 2012**

Dear Colleague,

## **DEVELOPING THE NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM**

As you will be aware, the Health and Social Care Act has received Royal Assent and passed into law. The focus of the health debate can now move onto the practical steps needed to implement the legislation and improve the health and social care system for our population.

To coincide with the Act receiving Royal Assent, the Department of Health has published a special edition of *the month*, the regular update from the NHS Chief Executive. This includes a detailed explanation of the reforms that will now take place and the progress already made.

This edition of *the month* includes a summary of our work to develop the new public health system, and is online at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Bulletins/themonth/index.htm>

These are exciting times for all of us in the public health community. The Government set out a bold vision for the future in the Public Health White Paper *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* supporting self-esteem and behavioural changes, promoting healthy choices and changing the environment to support longer, healthier lives. The Public Health Outcomes Framework has renewed the focus on outcomes for improved life expectancy and reduced inequalities.

The reforms in the new Health and Social Care Act give public health a higher profile role, making the changes that are necessary right across communities, including a new statutory duty shared by the NHS, the Board and the Secretary of State to reduce inequalities in health when they undertake their public health responsibilities in 2013.

Giving local authorities a leading role in public health will allow them to draw on their local knowledge, needs and experience. Using the life course approach they will have the power and funding to protect and improve the public's health and wellbeing, and the ability to tackle the wider social determinants of health and health inequalities.

Significantly, they will be able to deliver integrated services that improve the health of residents, and Directors of Public Health will occupy key leadership positions to be able to drive up results.

This local focus for delivery will be underpinned and supported by expert advice and guidance at a national level. Public Health England will bring together the knowledge and capabilities currently spread across a range of organisations, strengthening and supporting public health delivery across the three domains of public health - health protection, health improvement and healthcare public health.

Coupled with the rest of the reforms in the health and social care system, these important changes can make a significant difference to the health of the population. Of course, the NHS will continue to play its full role, working closely with local authorities and Public Health England. The NHS Commissioning Board will have a significant part to play in commissioning some public health services, and those providing care across the NHS will be looking to make every clinical contact count, in terms of protecting and improving the health of the public.

Establishing the new public health arrangements in a short timescale – and ensuring there is no dip in performance – is both a challenge and an opportunity for us all.

Yet we have already achieved a great deal together since the publication of the *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* in 2010, and I am very grateful to you for the role you are already playing in this. Your help, support and contributions have been critical in our success so far.

I am confident we can continue to harness our collective experience, expertise and determination to create a world-class public health system.

I look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming months to make this vision a reality.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally C Davies'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot above the 'i' at the end.

Professor Dame Sally C Davies  
Chief Medical Officer  
Chief Scientific Adviser