



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Nadine Dorries MP
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12th May 2020

Dear Duncan,

Evidence Review on Sleep and Health

As you know the Government's prevention green paper '*Advancing our Health: Prevention in the 2020s*' recognised that the relationship between sleep and health is a public health topic that has received relatively little policy attention to date, despite growing evidence on the health impacts of insufficient or poor-quality sleep.

The green paper therefore committed, as a first step, to a review of the evidence on sleep and health. I am therefore writing to you formally to commission that review, the scope and timing of which have been discussed between officials and are detailed overleaf.

I look forward to receiving the review's findings on this important topic.

NADINE DORRIES

Evidence Review on Sleep and Health

Introduction and background

1. The Government's prevention green paper '*Advancing our Health: Prevention in the 2020s*' recognised that the relationship between sleep and health is a public health topic that has received relatively little policy attention to date.
2. However, there is growing evidence on the health impacts of lack of sleep with insufficient or poor-quality sleep associated with physical and mental health problems. Lack of sleep may also have a negative impact on somebody's recovery from illness or surgery. The direction of causality is likely to run in both directions – with poor sleep leading to health problems, and vice versa. Some estimates suggest up to three-quarters of adults in the UK regularly sleep less than 7 hours per night.
3. The green paper therefore included the following commitment:

“as a first step, the government will review the evidence on sleep and health. This is with a view to informing the case for clear national guidance on the daily recommended hours of sleep for individuals in different age brackets, and to raise awareness of the key ‘sleep hygiene’ factors that can support healthy sleeping.”

(Alongside this, the NHS will also determine what more can be done to ensure those in care settings are getting the amount of rest that they need).

Aim/ objectives

4. Normal and healthy sleep is defined by its quality, regularity, timing, duration and lack of disturbance or disorder. There are roughly 100 known sleep disorders, typically categorised as i) sleep deprivation (insufficient amount or quality of sleep), ii) sleep disruption (issues with maintaining continuous sleep), and iii) issues occurring during sleep (such as sleep apnoea). Good 'sleep hygiene' (which includes behavioural and

environmental factors) is considered key to promoting normal and healthy sleep. The concept of 'sleep and health' is therefore broad and complex.

5. In the light of growing public interest in the extent to which sleep disruption and deprivation is impacting on public health, Public Health England is hereby commissioned **to undertake a broad review of the evidence on sleep and health in order to update our existing knowledge and inform future policy development including possible advice to the public.** This will include:

- a. the nature and extent of the links between sleep and both mental and physical health (taking account of the bi-directional relationship)
- b. current levels and trends in sleep behaviour in England over time, and what is known about the main drivers of any changes
- c. key factors and interventions that i) promote normal and healthy sleep and ii) hinder normal and healthy sleep
- d. wider potential impacts relating to poor sleep, focusing on the economics cost of poor sleep, particularly in relation to productivity
- e. optimum levels of sleep across the life course, and
- f. evidence in relation to population sub-groups (e.g. those with child care responsibilities), and health inequalities.

6. It is envisaged that the review process will:

- include an expert reference group set up to provide expert insight into the review, and typically including academic, clinical, and/ or public health experts (as relevant) providing topic-related, methodological and practical expertise.
- adopt systematic review methodologies using accelerated methods ('rapid reviews') providing sufficient quality is retained
- engage with and/ or draw on the perspectives of individuals with 'lived experience' of sleep difficulties

hence the review will comprise of a series of focused reviews resulting in a comprehensive evidence review on the topic. It is understood that PHE will wish to commission at least part of the work from academia.

7. Primary analysis of data to ascertain levels and trends of sleep behaviours in England may be required if i) this is not available in the literature and ii) a suitable dataset is identified.

Outputs and publication arrangements (if applicable)

8. The evidence review's findings should comprise a written report to the Department for Health and Social Care. A modular approach to outputs would be welcomed in order that discrete outputs can be considered as soon as practicable. Findings should be appropriately peer-reviewed in order to ensure that the study is suitable for publication in spring 2021; any arrangements for publication must be agreed in advance with the Department.

Timing and resources

9. The evidence review should aim to conclude in March 2021. A stocktake on findings emerging from the evidence review should be held prior to the end of the 2020 calendar year, in order that timely consideration of implications for policy development can begin at the earliest opportunity.
10. PHE has agreed to resource the review within existing funding envelopes (assuming the scope envisaged above) and will work with Departmental colleagues to identify specific resource as part of business planning. This is subject to the ongoing need for PHE to prioritise resources for its response to COVID-19, and PHE will consult DHSC should it become necessary to reconsider the schedule for this work

Keeping in touch

11. As a commissioned review, it will be appropriate for Departmental officials to liaise with PHE colleagues conducting the evidence review as it progresses with observer status for any relevant proceedings.