

To: Chairs of SHAs
Chief Executives of SHAs
Chairs of PCTs
Chief Executives of PCTs
Chief Executives of local councils with social services responsibility
Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (*via the CE of local councils*)
Directors of Adult Social Services
Lead Members for Adult Social Care (*via the CE of local councils*)
Chairs of NHS Trusts

16 November 2006

Dear Colleague

DIGNITY IN CARE

On Tuesday 14 November, I launched an important new campaign to raise the profile of treating people receiving care services with dignity. I wanted to draw this to your attention.

Both health and social care services have made great strides in recent years in driving down waiting lists and improving access to services. However, this emphasis on throughput has at times been at the expense of the quality of care provided. What I want to do through the campaign is to re-dress that balance and to put dignity at the heart of care.

Since, joining the Department as the Minister for Care Services in May this year, I have heard from a wide range of people about what dignity means to them. It is clear to me from that listening exercise that dignity matters a lot to people. It is also clear that many people do not know what they should expect from a service that respects dignity.

Through the campaign, I intend that we will:

- Raise awareness of dignity in care and inspire local people to take action
- Spread best practice and support people and organisations to drive up standards
- Reward and recognise those who make a difference and go that extra mile

I want to get everyone talking about dignity. My aim is to stimulate a country-wide debate about the importance of care services respecting the dignity of those who use them.

Your support will be essential to the success of the campaign. I hope you'll work in partnership with me on this and use your influence to get this high your local agenda.

On 14 November, I invited people to join me in taking up The Dignity Challenge. The Dignity Challenge is a clear statement of what people can expect from a service that respects dignity. It is backed up by "dignity tests" that can be used by services see how they measure up to the Challenge. I want people to use this as:

- A challenge to service providers to ensure their services respect dignity
- A challenge to commissioners to ensure they commission only services that respect dignity, and
- A challenge to the public to test how their local services measure up, and to tackle services that don't respect dignity rather than tolerating them.

I also invited people to join a new network of local champions of dignity. I am asking those champions to challenge poor practice and raise the profile of dignity in care in their local areas. I hope you will welcome these champions and I encourage you to work with them and support them in taking forward their roles.

A copy of the Dignity Challenge is attached to this letter and you can find out more about the campaign, the champions network and the steps we have taken to help support people and organisations in taking up this challenge at www.dh.gov.uk/dignityincare.

Alongside the Challenge I also announced:

- A £67m capital investment to help local authorities improve the physical environment of care homes
- An online Dignity in Care Practice Guide
- A partnership with Investors in People (IIP) UK
- A programme of service improvement support to be delivered locally
- Support for this agenda from the health and social care regulators

I would like to see Overview and Scrutiny Committees building time into their work programmes to review local commissioning practices and service provision against the expectations set out in the Dignity Challenge.

I would be grateful if the Chief Executives of local councils could ensure a copy of this letter is passed to:

- (i) the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (ii) the Lead Members for Adult Social Care, where they exist.

I hope I can count on your support and that together we can create a care system where there is zero tolerance of abuse and disrespect of older people.

Ivan Lewis MP

The Dignity Challenge

High quality care services that respect people's dignity should:

1. have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse.
2. support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family.
3. treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service.
4. enable people to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control.
5. listen and support people to express their needs and wants.
6. respect people's right to privacy.
7. ensure people feel able to complain without fear of retribution.
8. engage with family members and carers as care partners.
9. assist people to maintain confidence and a positive self-esteem.
10. act to alleviate people's loneliness and isolation.