

Dame Lesley Regan appointed Women's Health Ambassador

- Women's Health Ambassador to support the implementation of the upcoming Women's Health Strategy for England
- Dame Lesley to be supported by a Deputy Ambassador focused on better understanding the challenges faced in accessing services across communities

Women's health and care will be further improved following the historic appointment of Dame Lesley Regan as the government's first ever Women's Health Ambassador for England.

Bringing with her a raft of expertise spanning a 42 year career in women's health with particular interest in miscarriage, period problems, gynaecological surgery and menopause, she will support the implementation of the upcoming Women's Health Strategy. The strategy aims to tackle the gender health gap and ensure services meet the needs of women throughout their life.

She continues in her role as Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Imperial College London St Mary's Hospital Campus, and remains in active clinical practice.

Women's Health Ambassador Dame Lesley Regan said:

Having spent my career working with and caring for women, it is a great honour to be appointed as Women's Health Ambassador for the first Government-led Women's Health Strategy in England.

This is an important opportunity to get it right for women and girls, and make a real difference to 51% of our population by addressing the inequalities that exist across society.

I look forward to working with women, girls, health services, charities, policy makers, the Government and other key partners to implement this strategy.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The healthcare system needs to work for everyone, and I am committed to tackling inequalities which exist within it, particularly for women.

Closing the gender health gap is critical for a fair health and care system in the future. I look forward to working closely with Dame Lesley on our shared mission to ensure all women feel listened to by the health and care system and are able to access the support

and services they need.

Closing the gender health gap is vital to the governments wider levelling up ambition. A lack of support, awareness and understanding of health conditions specific to women can be harmful not only to the health and happiness of women, but the health of the economy.

1 in 4 women consider leaving their job as a result of the menopause, and ensuring women have the right support in place to stay in the workplace for longer will not only enable them to live fulfilled lives, but help to boost the economy and help tackle the rising costs of living. To demonstrate this, the civil service recently signed the Women of Work Menopause Pledge, committing to ensuring those going through the menopause are supported.

Dame Lesley will be instrumental in driving forward the system level changes needed to close the gender health gap and eradicating deep seated biases.

Bringing with her a wealth of contacts across the medical profession, including from her roles as Honorary Secretary of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and the Immediate Past President (2016-2019) of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), Dame Lesley will leverage her networks ensuring the scale of change needed, and the role clinicians need to play in tackling the gender health gap is understood.

Minister for Women's Health Maria Caulfield said:

Since we launched our Women's Health Call for Evidence over a year ago, we have made great progress in raising the profile of women's health. From the formation of the UK wide menopause taskforce and publication of our Vision document, to legislating to ban hymenoplasty and virginity testing and appointing a chair of the HRT taskforce to help more menopausal women access this lifeline medication.

The appointment of Dame Lesley as the Women's Health Ambassador for England is yet another step in the right direction to giving women's health the platform and profile it needs.

We are embarking on an important journey to eradicate the gender health gap. There is no quick fix. But I look forward to working together with Dame Lesley as we take the next steps to implement our Women's Health Strategy and beyond.

To maximise the positive impact of the Women's Health Ambassador, the appointment of Dame Lesley will be followed by the appointment of a deputy ambassador who will work closely with the Ambassador and be responsible for increasing awareness of the Women's Health Strategy and its ambitions and better understanding the barriers and issues of concern of under-served groups of women and girls, for example through community outreach.

Building on the Vision for the Women's Health Strategy in England publication, the Strategy will be the first step to realising the government's missions:

- that all women feel comfortable talking about their health and no longer face taboos when they do talk about their health
- that women can access services that meet their needs across the life course
- that all women will have access to high-quality information and education from childhood through to adulthood
- that all women feel supported in the workplace and can reach their full potential at work
- to embed routine collection of demographic data of participants in research trials to make sure that our research reflects the society we serve

This is the latest step taken by the government to ensure women's healthcare needs are met. This includes taking action to increase access and reduce the cost of HRT meaning women can pay a one-off charge equivalent to two single prescription charges, currently £18.70, for all their HRT prescriptions for a year.

The creation of a prepayment certificate will mean women can access HRT on a month by month basis if need be, easing pressure on supply, while keeping the cost of HRT low. This system will be implemented by April 2023.

To ensure women can reliably access HRT, decisive action has been taken including the appointment of Madelaine McTernan as chair of the HRT supply taskforce and issuing of Serious Shortage Protocols to even out distribution and provide greater flexibility to allow community pharmacists to supply specified alternatives, where appropriate.