
Nicola Blackwood MP
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

29 July 2016

Dear Minister,

On behalf of Breast Cancer UK, I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation and to introduce you to our work, which has important relevance to your new role.

Breast Cancer UK works on the primary prevention of breast cancer and focuses specifically on the environmental and chemical causes of the disease. Whilst improvements in treatments and diagnosis has led to a reduction in mortality from breast cancer, age standardised incidence rates continue to rise year on year and now over 60,000 women are diagnosed annually in the UK.¹

The majority of breast cancers are thought to be caused by environmental and lifestyle factors², yet we invest relatively little in trying to find out more about possible causes and only small amounts in trying to prevent them.³ We can prevent many more cases of breast cancer – not just those that are attributable to lifestyle choices such as alcohol consumption and lack of exercise, but also those that are attributable to exposure to harmful chemicals. We are particularly concerned about the adverse effects of exposures to hormone disrupting chemicals that have the ability to interfere with the human hormone system in such a way as to make us more vulnerable to hormonal cancers like breast cancer.

Once you have had a chance to settle in to your new role, I would very much like to discuss what new and innovative measures your Department could put in place to help improve public health policies and help to reduce risk of the disease – not just treat the symptoms.

¹ Cancer Registration Statistics, England: 2014:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/dataset/cancerregistrationstatisticscancerregistrationstatisticsengland>

² Economopoulou et al. (2015). Beyond BRCA: New hereditary breast cancer susceptibility genes. *Cancer Treatment Reviews* 41: 1–8.

³ It is predicted that 50% of people in the UK will get cancer at some point in their lives, yet only 3.5% of cancer research funding was spent on interventions to help prevent cancers in 2014

Ahmad et al. (2015). Trends in the lifetime risk of developing cancer in Great Britain: comparison of risk for those born from 1930 to 1960.

British Journal of Cancer. 112(5): 943-947. NCRI Cancer Research database Latest data (2014) <http://www.ncri.org.uk/what-we-do/research-database/> (last accessed 13.11.15).

In particular, I would like to discuss with you, how your Department intends to oversee the public health implications of the UK's eventual withdrawal from the EU, specifically in respect to the body of EU Regulations that protect UK citizens from chemicals that have been linked to breast cancer.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, or the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care, who I have also written to, and discuss this matter further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Ladbrook', with a flourish at the end.

Lynn Ladbrook
Chief Executive