



Public Health
England

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Protecting and improving the nation's health

Professor Susan Bewley
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Dear Professor Bewley

I am writing further to our recent correspondence on the breast cancer screening age extension trial, which we have treated as a formal complaint, together with your subsequent email of 8 December.

Public Health England's Board considered your concerns as well as your BMJ letter at its meeting of 29 November and has since seen a copy of your 8 December email. The Board was briefed by Professor Patnick on the history of the breast cancer screening programme in England and the background to the age extension trial, which commenced prior to PHE's establishment in April 2013.

PHE is committed to ensuring that the age extension trial is carried out in accordance with the requirements as they apply in England. The Board was therefore reassured to note that the trial had recently received renewed ethical approval from the Harrow National Research Ethics Service Committee (the Committee), for which the NHS Health Research Authority is responsible. The Board further noted that this substantial amendment to trial protocol, governance structure and patient information material had been considered by a full meeting of the Committee. The Board unanimously agreed that the trial presents an important opportunity to explore the benefits and harms of breast screening for a wider range of women and is satisfied that it is being carried out within an appropriate governance and ethical framework. The Board fully supports the trial, including its management team and governance approach, and will review progress in six months' time.

I note from your email of 8 December that an appeal has been lodged with the Committee. We will, of course, provide them with any further information or clarification that they require in considering this and, more generally, will ensure that we continue to operate within the requirements for clinical trials as they apply in England. We also stand ready to assist the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee with any questions or concerns they might have. Finally, I was pleased to note from your email that you recognise the improvements to the patient information sheet since I know that this was something about which you had previously expressed concern.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive