

Dear Sir,

The NHS is set to be the big election issue in the run-up to May – and politicians of all parties are looking for vote winning policies to give them the edge.

Many pollsters see the ‘grey vote’ as holding the key, which is why much of the NHS debate focuses on meeting the needs of an ageing population. This is important, but so are the nation’s children and young people.

A recent ComRes poll of the UK public reveals that Britons are just as passionate about children’s health as they are care for the elderly, with 94% saying that child health should be a priority for the NHS. Over three quarters say ensuring consistent health service provision for children and young people, reducing child death rates and reducing childhood cancers should be a high priority for the next Government. More than two-thirds see improving children and young people’s mental health as a high priority.

And when it comes to policies to improve child health, nine in 10 Britons support teaching children how to cook and about the nutritional value of food in schools, 82% want to see compulsory personal, social and health education (PSHE) introduced in primary and secondary schools, and over three quarters (77%) back policies that support women reducing risky behaviours, such as smoking, during pregnancy. Almost two thirds of Britons also back a ban on junk food advertising on TV prior to the 9pm watershed.

Politicians must give as much attention to child health as they do care for the elderly. Not only does it make strong moral sense – but it makes real economic and political sense too.

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Dr Peter Carter *Chief executive, Royal College of Nursing*

Dr David Richmond *President, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists*

Professor John R Ashton *President, Faculty of Public Health*

Dr Janet Atherton *President, Association of Directors of Public Health*

Dr Peter Hindley *Chair, Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

Dr Ingrid Wolfe *Co-chair, British Association for Child and Adolescent Public Health*

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Barbara Gelb *Chief executive, Together for Short Lives*

Matthew Reed *Chief executive, The Children's Society*

Kathy Evans *Chief executive, Children England*

Francine Bates *Chief executive, The Lullaby Trust*

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Deborah Arnott *Chief executive, Action on Smoking and Health*

Chris Head *Chief executive, Meningitis Research Foundation*

Amanda Batten *Chief executive, Contact a Family*

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