

Public Health England



Friday message

Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

18 January 2013

Dear everyone

As I continue my visits to Local Authorities and public health teams around the country I am struck by the range of challenges faced in different geographies. There is, of course, no 'one size fits all' when there is such variation between localities, but there is a common approach to problem solving and this is evident in the vision, innovation and practical good sense seen in the solutions. For example, rural deprivation is a major issue for some authorities such as West Lindsey District Council and Lincolnshire County Council. Working together they have identified the key to improving the health of their local populations as the provision of more jobs, better housing, and tackling crime. West Lindsey has well established GP referral schemes to now nine walking groups to assist in weight loss and reduce isolation. Lincolnshire County Council is focusing on supporting children and families, recognising that the foundations of good health are laid in the very early years of life and has also made good progress in addressing drug and alcohol addiction and offender health services. Both local authorities are obviously motivated by their new responsibilities for improving the health of their populations and are very keen for PHE to work closely with them and with their local NHS commissioning boards. We intend to do exactly that.

Isolation is not merely a matter of geography, people can be utterly alone and lonely in urban areas, a point which was most poignantly made when I visited Sheena Dunbar who runs Age UK Waltham Forest, at the Peterhouse Community Centre on Monday. Loneliness accounts for more early deaths than smoking. In Waltham Forest, four out of ten people over 65 live alone. Age UK and other organisations in the voluntary and community sector have a vital role to play in helping local authorities and the NHS address this in ways that are practical and reach the most vulnerable.

Although it has taken longer than originally thought and I am acutely aware of the anxieties this has caused, we are now tantalisingly close to reaching the point where all of the staff due to move into PHE have a designated post. I promised that all staff whose work is moving to PHE from the sending organisations would be offered posts and this has not changed. The vast majority of staff have 'lifted and shifted' across, others have been matched, and there have been a limited number of competitions. For the small number of permanent staff whose current post does not appear in PHE structures and who have not yet been offered an equivalent post, opportunities are being identified.

And finally, our national headquarters are moving onto the fifth floor at Wellington House on Monday and refurbishment of the fourth floor is now underway. There will be new telephone numbers and there may be some disruption for a few days.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Selbie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.