



Friday message

Friday 14 March 2014

Dear everyone

We are in the process of refreshing our corporate business plan, one year in, and will be sharing this for comment and improvement over the next few weeks. It will include assurances around our first duty to protect the nation from infectious disease and environmental hazards and will set stretching goals for the science and professional services where we make a unique contribution, ranging from national surveillance systems, emergency response, specialist microbiology and vaccines, disease registration, and immunisation programmes, to drug and alcohol oversight, cancer and non-cancer screening programmes. We will also set out how we will deliver on the duty we share with Local Government to improve the health of the nation and how we will support NHS England as their public health adviser, and in ensuring sustainable healthcare. The same challenges are being experienced worldwide. For example, we are all facing the same problems of obesity, a leading cause of diabetes and heart disease. We have been looking at all the possible evidence-driven priorities, taking into account what Wanless said about the fully engaged citizen and Sir Michael Marmot's seminal contribution on the causes of the causes of ill health as well as, of course, drawing on the *Global Burden of Disease* research. Almost certainly we will want to set stretching goals in a small number of evidence-led themes such as alcohol and dementia. We want to be as ambitious for the public's health as you are. Councillor Forbes, Leader of Newcastle City Council has suggested we could adopt a federated approach, in effect picking up, amplifying and aggregating expert views including those being expressed and developed at a local level. I agree. This would boost opportunities for co-production and answer the criticism I sometimes hear from the field that PHE relies too much on its own expertise. All this we need to get right over the coming weeks and months as we develop our work plan for the next three to five years.

On Tuesday I joined Alderman Fiona Woolf, the Lord Mayor of London, and Dame Carol Black, our expert adviser on Health and Work as a speaker at the inaugural 'Business Healthy' Conference, convened by the City of London. The City may have a resident population of only 9,000 but every day around 400,000 people come in to work in the Square Mile. Many City employers understand that investing in their staffs' health, including their mental health, is really good for their bottom line. We often associate the City with big names and indeed big businesses are developing innovative ways to look after their most important assets – their people – but this is just as critical for smaller businesses. Many of the 14,000 City employers are small or medium size enterprises (SME), and for them in particular, the absence of a key member of staff can be the difference between success and failure. Many SMEs say they are in need of practical advice to help them take cost-effective action on workplace health. We will be working closely with the Corporation of London to support and learn from its expertise, help to develop a City-wide network of SMEs, and identify creative ways to support SMEs across the country to promote staff health and wellbeing.

And finally, we have been working with the Department of Health and Department for Communities and Local Government on including a health section in the latter's new National Planning Practice Guidance and I am very pleased to say that this guidance is now live and includes a comprehensive [section](#) on health and wellbeing – the first time this has been incorporated within a national planning policy document.

With best wishes