



Public Health
England



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Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 7 June 2013

Dear everyone

Lest we forget, health is about so much more than health care. Both Michael Marmot and the late Derek Wanless have made this point many times over and a recent [US study](#) ranked the factors determining the best health outcomes for local populations. Social and economic issues such as education, employment and violent crime, accounted for 40 per cent, health behaviours (alcohol, tobacco and sexual behavior) followed on 30 per cent, while clinical services, including quality and access to health care, accounted for 20 per cent. In other words, health is more affected by economic, social and environmental factors – whether people have meaningful employment, somewhere decent to live and a supportive group of friends – than by anything else. Recognising this is what underpins the point and purpose of health and wellbeing boards, bringing together the importance of health care with the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and beginning the shift to prevention and early intervention that is so important to improving health, addressing inequalities and to managing what money we have better.

The point about our wider environment having a major impact on our health and wellbeing is, of course, an obvious one – we need to feel safe on our streets, we want community space where we can relax and children can play safely, and we want the routes we take to be as hazard-free and enjoyable as possible. Public places without lots of people walking in them are a clear warning that all is not well, much like those canaries in mines whose song died as conditions deteriorated. On Monday I joined [Living Streets](#) on a walking tour of one of their projects in Rye Lane in Peckham. The Greater London Authority has commissioned Living Streets – a charity dedicated to creating more walkable, liveable spaces in the UK – to do community street audits at a number of sites in London and work with local authorities to renew them in ways that will encourage walking. They have worked closely with the local community, especially young and older people, to find out how the people who use that street experience it and how they would want it improved. Walking is one of the most simple, cheap and effective activities we can encourage to curb obesity, and seeing the difference between the older parts of Rye Lane and the parts that have been done up, it was remarkable how careful consultation and modest improvements can make an area so much more appealing to pedestrians. It is a perfect example of what can be achieved through bringing together the multiple agencies responsible for public areas with those who use them with the simple aim of making them happier and healthier places to live, work and play.

And finally, as you may be seeing, this week we launched our Smokefree Homes and Cars advertising [campaign](#) which will run for six weeks on TV, online and with support from national, regional and local partners. More than 300,000 children visit their GP each year, and 9,500 are admitted to hospital, due to the effects of exposure to second hand smoke, ranging from respiratory illnesses and asthma, to meningitis. Many parents are unaware that more than 80 per cent of secondhand smoke is invisible and odourless – the TV adverts show that smoking out of a car window or the backdoor is not enough to protect children.

With best wishes