

Public Health England

Friday message



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive Designate

2 November 2012

Dear everyone

I had a very positive experience on Monday in being introduced to the voluntary sector strategic partners and listening to how we can best work with them as a profoundly important partner from the outset. The voluntary sector across the country is made up of more than 900,000 organisations, has a workforce of over 1.6 million and combined assets of some £244bn. Local government will have statutory responsibility from next April for addressing the determinants of good health – having a job or something meaningful to do during the day, a home that is decent, warm and in a safe neighbourhood, and someone who cares about you such as a friend, a neighbour. The voluntary sector will help them achieve this – it would take the statutory public health system ten years to have a fraction of their impact and reach. We will work alongside the voluntary sector and do all we can to help get them “into the room” to co-design services that are integrated as well as, of course, delivering them. One without the other rather misses the point.

That is exactly what I saw in action when I spent last Friday in Gloucestershire where the local authority, clinical commissioners, police and voluntary organisations have got together to provide a range of community services for the poorest and the excluded. The community has set up a Friendship Café where young people particularly are encouraged to develop interests and hobbies; a city farm is being run by volunteers which is free to local residents and involves them in the natural world on their own doorstep; activity sessions are provided seven days a week at Kingfisher Church, led by their inspirational Pastor Jan Burn, where volunteers work with young adults with learning disabilities amongst many others; and SkillZONE, a purpose-built educational facility which gives children and adults opportunities to learn about street, fire and personal safety. What is being done here brings people and communities together. Focusing on the poorest and most poorly is the only way we can truly address health inequalities and give everyone, especially the youngest, the chance to be the best they can be.

Public Health England will be working closely with our colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with whom we share many similar responsibilities and provide advice and support on an agreed basis. These relationships are of great value to England and we hope to strengthen our work together. On Tuesday I spent the day with the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales and had the opportunity to hear about their focus on health improvement and addressing inequalities as well as their strengths in academia. We know from our health protection work how artificial physical borders are to the public's health. Good practice, of course, knows no borders and we can learn from each other in creating a healthier and safer UK.

Finally, I want to mention the Right Care Conference, [Health and Healthcare Public Health: shaping the new system](#), on Friday 9 November and to encourage people to attend. Population healthcare will be a core contribution to effective commissioning of NHS services and is a key responsibility of the public health teams being embedded in local government. We must get this right if we are to make the paradigm shift from treatment to prevention and from late to early intervention. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of treatment. Public health specialists are the professionals who know how to do this.

With best wishes

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