

Public Health England



Friday message

Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive Designate

12 October 2012

Dear everyone

There will be many opportunities over coming weeks and months to flesh out our priorities as we agree work programmes with the Secretary of State, the Local Government Association and the NHS Commissioning Board. I have been emphasising the critical role of local government and Health and Well-Being Boards in addressing the social determinants of health and the importance of prevention and early intervention. The emerging focus is on avoidable mortality, long term conditions, and integrated care, all with a strong emphasis on older people. The public health system has a unique contribution to make in each of these and the current Stoptober campaign is a good example of the kind of intervention which addresses the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the UK – smoking.

If you have not already seen it, you may wish to look at the [Drug Treatment 2012](#) report published last week by the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA). As part of Public Health England, the NTA will bring their profound expertise and experience to bear across the public health system at a time when we need to reach further and deeper in addressing issues of addiction and, increasingly rehabilitation, to both drugs and alcohol. For the past ten years they have worked with local partners in criminal justice, health and social care to transform the quality and availability of drug treatment – this report showed the huge progress that has been made with nearly 30,000 drug users recovered from addiction last year compared to 11,000 seven years ago. Their experience will serve PHE well as local alliances are forged and refreshed. Druglink have published an [article](#) on this.

Aligning research and science with practical “know how” is a recurring theme during all my discussions across the system. People are rightly looking to PHE to take the lead on this. At the annual scientific conference of the National Institute for Health Research in Sheffield on Wednesday, delegates stressed the importance of sharing positive interventions – such as the initiative in Hull to reduce eye injuries from drink induced violence by substituting plastic for glass in bars – so that these could be replicated across the country wherever people face similar problems. One of the messages was that we need to develop evidence-based models that make the case for public health investment and in ways that work for local government. We have to make what is known visible, accessible and practical – taking the evidence down to electoral wards so it is at the fingertips of elected members who are making decisions. For instance we know that if cars were restricted to 20mph on residential roads this would reduce child accidents and deaths by an important margin when every child’s death is a tragedy. There is very little within the remit of local government that does not have an impact on the health of their communities in some way so the more evidence they have on what works, the greater the impact they can have.

Finally, I am continuing to travel the country and this week my particular thanks go to Sheffield and Newcastle for providing invaluable insights not only into the work they are doing, but their ambitions too.

With best wishes

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