



Public Health  
England



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 13 September 2013

### Dear everyone

I had the honour of opening our first PHE Annual Conference in Warwick over Tuesday and Wednesday. The 1,400 participants, representing 400 organisations, came from all parts of England as well as Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and from all over the world including Canada, Japan, the Falkland Islands, New Zealand, the United States, Nigeria and Sweden. The conference combined the science and art of public health and provided an excellent platform for sharing the full range and reach of those working to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing. There was a genuine and deep rooted sense of possibility, with everyone soaking up the learning and how to harness its potential. Through our keynote lecture on science and society, given by the remarkable Professor Paul Fine, Professor of Communicable Disease Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, we took a journey through centuries of scientific and social advances in public health, long before the term was coined. The extraordinary achievements of the past pave the way for great things ahead. We know what needs to be done, by whom and where and that the magic always comes in remembering that it is people and relationships that matter most, through people reaching agreements and building relationships at local level and looking to national action only where that is best taken. Thank you to everyone who came, to the speakers and contributors and, of course, to the organisers.

On the second day of the conference, I attended a breakfast briefing on the new Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control. This [Declaration](#) was developed by Newcastle City Council in May and has already been adopted by a number of councils including Warwickshire County Council who spoke at the briefing. Warwickshire is the first county council to adopt the Declaration, describing their decision as a "no brainer". Many public health bodies have endorsed the declaration including ourselves, the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Faculty of Public Health, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Chief Medical Officer. The Declaration is a whole council political commitment to tackling the early death and misery smoking brings to their communities. There is a debate to be had about what it means to be getting it right on diet, exercise and alcohol, but there is nothing good for our health about smoking. The Declaration covers action to reduce smoking prevalence and narrow inequalities and is a great example of local government showing leadership in their new responsibilities for improving the public's health. The hope is that every local authority will consider adopting the Declaration.

September got off to a flying start with two of our local PHE centres – Kent, Surrey and Sussex and the West Midlands – convening gatherings to listen to and explore how we can best support our partners across local government, the local NHS, the emergency services and the voluntary and community sector. These events are being scheduled all over the country and there are so many unsung examples of good work going on everywhere. As a delegate at one of the events said, our local role as PHE is "first and foremost to convene the forum where these examples can be shared and where system-wide learning happens".

With best wishes