

Public Health England

Friday message



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive Designate

17 August 2012

Dear everyone

Last week I again saw at first hand the quality of work, the commitment and dedication of our public health teams across the country. We have such an impressive resource that we must not miss the opportunity given us by the creation of Public Health England and the leadership of local government. Lord Victor Adebowale, Chief Executive of Turning Point and a non executive director of the NHS Commissioning Board, made the point that we cannot afford to be pessimistic about succeeding. PHE will provide the expert knowledge and practical support to local action aimed at improving health outcomes across the course of people's lives, regardless of where they started out.

It is of course our job to do much more than analyse and comment on the evidence we have to hand, as important as this is to give colour and context. We will be judged by Government and the public on improved outcomes, not our analysis, and the measures that matter are set out in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

We have the facts. For example this week the North West Public Health Observatory has published evidence which shows the impact of social circumstance on alcohol related deaths. In two local authorities, a ninety minute drive from each other, in the more affluent there are 20 deaths per 100,000, and in the poorer, 74 per 100,000. What matters is how we respond to this. I doubt there is anything brand new to learn and a genuine innovation would be to implement what we know already works and has been implemented successfully in other parts of the country. I will be asking the North West to say more on this as a consequence of their study but the principle applies to all of our work. I would welcome hearing about examples of good practice being locally implemented through copying what has worked elsewhere, i.e. moving from analysis to delivery.

Our specialist marketing team has just completed a major piece of tracking research on how people view their health. A finding I think of great interest is that while 80 per cent of adults agree looking after their health is important, 92 per cent have at least one of the six risk behaviours: poor diet, inactivity, smoking, increasing/higher risk drinking, unprotected sex and drug taking. This data helps us understand what prevents people from living healthy lives.

With the health problems facing the nation and the evidence and the expertise we have between us we absolutely have to change this and PHE is there to help do it. The answer lies in how we best support local government and the NHS in taking this forward. That is a conversation for the autumn.

With best wishes

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