



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 17 October 2014

**Dear everyone**

On Wednesday Dr Paul Cosford and I visited our volunteer screening teams who have been trained and installed at high speed in all five of Heathrow's terminals. The logistics, coordination and procurement challenge has been phenomenal, but the most heartening aspect of all has been the can do attitude and flexibility of our staff, together with volunteers from the Cabinet Office and wider Whitehall, to step out of their customary duties and go to Heathrow at a moment's notice. They have come from all parts of the country, everywhere from Devon to Manchester and York and all points in between. Next week the focus will be on Gatwick and St Pancras and, once settled there, we will then move to include Manchester and Birmingham. I appreciate very much that we are taking people away from their normal work, and please be assured that we are thinking hard and listening carefully to those on the ground to see how we can make this more sustainable. What I am certain of is that we have the people who know how to keep the country safe and that is exactly what we will do. I am very grateful to all involved. Jeremy Hunt's statement in the House of Commons on Monday captured very precisely why the screening matters and what it involves as well as outlining the very considerable contribution the UK is making to the international effort.

The [report](#) of the London Health Commission, chaired by Lord Ara Darzi, was presented this week to the Mayor of London. Dr Yvonne Doyle, our Director for London, who is also the statutory health adviser to the Mayor, chaired an expert group on health and inequalities which strongly influenced the final recommendations. The plan will help deliver the Mayor's ambition to make London the healthiest major global city within 10 years. It proposes a raft of measures, unprecedented in their scope, to combat the threats posed by tobacco, alcohol, obesity, lack of exercise and pollution. Already the recommendations have attracted favourable international comment, including from Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York City. Londoners were also polled as the report was developed and they are strongly in favour of the recommendations. Local Government and the NHS in London have been closely involved in the Commission's work which also examined the quality of primary care and the need for a stronger emphasis on avoidable mortality in the city. The Commission has set 10 specific ambitions for the next decade, almost all of which dovetail with our own priorities for improving the public's health including: giving all the capital's children a healthy, happy start to life; getting London fitter with better food, more exercise and healthier living; making work a healthy place to be; helping Londoners kick unhealthy habits such as smoking, and caring for the most mentally ill so they live longer, healthier lives.

And finally, the almost unlimited opportunities of digital technologies are now being harnessed in earnest. As our Chief Knowledge Officer, Professor John Newton, recently said at the Healthcare Efficiency Through Technology Expo in London, there have been some very exciting developments in technology for health and well-being, such as apps, wearable technology and patient-held records. However, if they are to achieve their full potential they need to be able to interact with the IT systems used in healthcare and be evaluated against hard outcomes. To achieve this integration we need to work closely with industry, so the public can be supported in taking steps to improve their own health and well-being, and health and social care professionals have ready access to the data they need. All this is being taken forward under the auspices of the National Information Board chaired by Tim Kelsey of NHS England, with me as his deputy.

**With best wishes**