



Public Health  
England



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 11 October 2013

**Dear everyone**

We are as good as our people make us and one of our highest priorities is to create a work environment which fosters health and wellbeing and especially one where anyone experiencing mental illness feels genuinely valued, respected and able to flourish and contribute. Having been chief executive of a mental health service earlier in my career I am acutely aware that good mental health and a positive sense of wellbeing is hugely important to all of us and central to living a healthy and longer life. There is much to learn from modern psychiatry about the importance of supporting people in their own home environment, ensuring they have something meaningful to do in the day, enough money to live on and, again, the importance of companionship in maintaining good mental health. Our acute hospital services will, in time, recognise the journey psychiatry has taken in moving away from being bed-based and viewing people as patients, rather than citizens as partners in looking after their own health – a journey the rest of the NHS must inevitably also take over the coming years. For our own staff, we absolutely recognise the presence of mental health problems and hope over time to encourage people to be increasingly open about these and to have the confidence to seek help. This is a personal commitment from me and why, yesterday, alongside Dame Carol Black, chair of the Responsibility Deal Health at Work Network and Norman Lamb, Minister for Care and Support, I committed PHE to the new Public Health Responsibility Deal [pledge](#) to promote mental health, wellbeing and resilience in the workplace. One in six working-age adults will experience mental health problems each year, yet over 70% of employers do not have formal policies for stress management or on staff mental health. This pledge, with its practical advice and guidance, will help us and other employers to support staff with experience of mental illness tackle the associated stigma and build capacity for positive change. We are also doing [other](#) things. For example, on Tuesday we also signed up to the Time to Change [campaign](#), run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, which focuses on stigma and reducing discrimination. You cannot have good health without good mental health and this begins at home and continues in the workplace.

Over Wednesday and Thursday this week we were involved in a major test of emergency response and resilience arrangements involving every conceivable agency, including the military. The whole exercise was extremely well organised and it was observed by the Leaders of Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council and myself and the learning from this will, of course, be shared widely. So a big thank you to the chair of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum, Deputy Chief Constable Mike Veale, and the exercise planning team for giving me the opportunity to witness such great team work. I would also like to say a warm thank you to outgoing Public Health Minister Anna Soubry, who this week became the first woman to hold a Ministerial post in Defence, and to welcome Jane Ellison as our new Public Health Minister. We have had an early opportunity to meet and she looks forward to getting to know Local Government leaders, their teams and local partners.

And finally, Professor Virginia Murray, who leads our Extreme Events Team, has been given the great honour of being asked to be the vice-chair of the United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction Science and Technical Advisory Group. This is professional recognition of the highest order and will bring UK influence to bear on the emerging post-2015 global framework on disaster reduction.

**With best wishes**