



Public Health  
England



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 30 August 2013

### Dear everyone

I have been continuing my visits to upper tier and unitary authorities around the country and am confident that by this time next year I will have visited them all. The political leadership and talent that is being brought to bear on the urgent task of improving the public's health is remarkable. The differences in life chances across the country remain starkly unequal and these will not be addressed by central diktat but through local action. This week I had the opportunity to spend time with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and a good number of their colleagues from neighbouring councils. Stockton has managed a 56 per cent reduction in its Revenue Support Grant over the past four years and all local authorities have had to make similar very significant reductions. Over the course of the next two to three years testing times will continue and local government will effectively be managing on half of what they had before, yet they are not wringing their hands. This financial discipline has meant they have ascended to a place of much greater efficiency where they routinely share back office services and work across professions and functions and not in silos. More salutary still for the rest of us in public service, they see their leadership role as being about negotiating a partnership with their citizens and rather than believing that they need to be the provider of services they will work with whoever is best placed to best deliver them. This seems to me exactly the right approach and it works. For example, on the Isle of Wight, the Council has been working in partnership with Age UK on Good Neighbourhood Schemes, they have supported mums through an independent provider in their efforts to stop smoking during pregnancy, until recently a huge problem, and together with the local NHS and voluntary partners, they have been working to create a shared, integrated vision for health and social care on the island through their 'My life, a full life' programme. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has similar ambition and recognises, as they all do, that good health is more than the absence of illness and is not synonymous with the NHS, as important as this, of course, remains. I have also been glad to confirm on my travels that the public health ring fence grant is to remain in place for at least a third year (2015/16).

The public health family in the North West is to experience a great loss with the retirement today of Professor Qutub Syed, our Centre Director for Cheshire and Merseyside. He has for many decades been an exceptional professional and academic leader in the North West, and the great care he has devoted to teaching future generations and nurturing his people are among his greatest qualities and we will miss him.

And finally, this week saw the launch of [Smart Restart](#), our new Change4Life back to school campaign to support families across England to make a healthy start to the new school year. It encourages children to spend less time in front of television and computer screens, do more physical activity, and eat healthier snacks and meals. You may already have seen the television, radio and digital advertising encouraging people to sign up for a six-week programme, with special offers, emails and text support, a free app and children's website. Thousands of families have already signed up.

With best wishes