



Public Health
England



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 28 February 2014

Dear everyone

The Health Select Committee have this week given the clearest indication of their expectations of Public Health England as the nation's conscience for the public's health and the need for us to have a strong voice, fearless and unfettered by politics or Government. They are complimentary about how we have met our primary duty of a safe transition but are concerned that we now move quickly and effectively to lead the transformation in the public's health that Parliament had in mind when we were created. This is very much speaking to what we naturally want to do and we welcome their [report](#) and look forward to giving much thought to the recommendations.

PHE contributed to the North of England Fairness Conference on Tuesday, hosted and co-ordinated by Neil Jack, Chief Executive of Blackpool Council and Dr Arif Rajpura, Blackpool's Director of Public Health. There is no further research needed to recognise the poor health in the north where, by almost every metric, those living there have a shorter life and suffer more years of ill health than those in the south. There are, of course, inequalities all over the nation but not to the same extent or so consistent and the Conference began to examine what could be done. We know that economic prosperity is a very significant driver for good health and that means a greater focus on new jobs, investing in decent homes and neighbourhoods and, crucially, ensuring a good start in life for children. This Conference brought together for the first time local authorities, the NHS, the voluntary and community sector and academia from across the north as they forge their plans to close the gap.

The lead responsibility for commissioning substance misuse services now rests with Local Government and, in partnership with the Association of Directors of Public Health, we are shortly to ask each Local Authority to share the progress they are making in improving prevention programmes and rates of drug and alcohol recovery through their expertise and focus on commissioning for outcomes and value for money. There is significant national interest in seeing continuous improvements in both these crucial public health concerns. This is the first opportunity for the new public health system to demonstrate its commitment to tackling substance misuse and the findings and examples of good practice will be made available to everyone.

Yesterday we held our first national NHS Health Check conference, attended by 450 delegates from across the country which focused on the implementation and evidence base for undertaking this national prevention programme and, critically, how to move on from measuring how many offers are being made to how many are actually being taken up and outcomes. A number of hopefully helpful publications were launched, including our own [NHS Health Check programme standards: a framework for quality improvement](#) as well as contributions from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and NICE. The national average uptake is hovering around 50 per cent and the ambition is to see this improve to 75 per cent, as Bolton and Stockport and a number of others have already done.

And finally, our nurses and midwives have been focused all week on their contribution to best practice in health protection and are supporting [NHS Change Day](#) on 3 March with a campaign pledge to continue this - just [click](#) and tick to join in.

Best Wishes