



Public Health  
England



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 27 September 2013

### Dear everyone

As Charles I observed, 'there is more to the doing than bidding it be done'. It is so easy, from a distance, to be confident about what needs to be done and often so much more difficult to actually make things happen. My experience of leading a number of organisations is of a direct correlation between distance and certainty and that is why listening and humility matter so much when you are with people at the front line. The closer you get to having to make things happen, the more colourful things usually are and is why it is always down to people and relationships.

For example, on Monday morning I attended the Enfield and Haringey Tobacco Control Alliance Conference. The speakers were engaging and the schoolchildren especially so. There was a great deal of innovation and it was a first for me to hear that they set aside fines for tobacco littering subject to completion of a smoking quitter programme. Enfield Council, the venue for the conference, has an unrelenting focus on creating new jobs and improving their housing stock. These are unquestionably the right priorities for improving health and their plan to reintroduce commercial market gardening – before the Second World War Enfield supplied most of the salad crops for London – will create around 1500 new jobs. I absolutely recognised the tough environment in which they operated, financially and with obstinate health inequalities, and they fully understood their new leadership role in addressing the causes of the causes of poor health.

Similarly, on Tuesday I spent the day with Louise Casey from the Troubled Families Programme on a visit to the Matson and Podsmead estates in Gloucestershire, meeting local people who were making their communities safer, more hopeful and more resilient. Again, it is people who make everything possible and often those who have the least achieve the most. On the Podsmead Estate, amongst the most deprived in the country, there is no GP or pharmacy and the local shop charges a lot more for a loaf of bread than a major supermarket. Unsurprisingly they are major users of the local A&E. We know that working directly with people in their own context, making small changes that can be banked and built on, is the way forward in breaking the cycle of despair and hopelessness that so many of our most deprived face. The statutory agencies have a part to play in helping them to help themselves.

Last weekend, our lead on global health security, Dr Brian McCloskey co-chaired the launch of the Global Centre for Mass Gathering Medicine at an international conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This marked the start of a collaboration between our WHO Collaborating Centre and the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia that Brian and our Chairman, Professor David Heymann, have been instrumental in developing, in partnership with UCL and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. It is testament to the high international regard for our expertise in preparing for major events, building public health capacity and improving global health security.

And finally, congratulations to the UK National Screening Committee and our NHS Newborn Blood Spot Screening Programme Team who, in partnership with Northgate Public Services, this week won the coveted HSJ award for Efficiency in Clinical Support Services. Their winning project ensures that babies born with a number of serious genetic conditions benefit from early identification and treatment to prevent irreversible harm or death.

With best wishes