



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 14 February 2014

Dear everyone

The impact of the [floods](#) and storms that have been battering the UK for weeks, particularly in the South and West, has provoked a national emergency. The damage and disruption to people's lives, homes and property has been awful and we know that the emotional and mental toll on those directly affected is considerable. From the outset, our own frontline staff have been working flat out to support their colleagues in Local Government, the Environment Agency and many others. As with all major incidents, planning for recovery goes alongside managing the disaster itself and in this we are also heavily engaged. This will embrace how to clean up safely, through to recognising and addressing the mental health consequences that inevitably flow from such depressing circumstances. I want to convey my profound thanks to everybody involved.

We are closely involved with the London Health Commission, an inspirational initiative set up by the Mayor and chaired by Professor the Lord Darzi, which is looking at how London's health and healthcare can be improved. Dr Yvonne Doyle, our London Regional Director, who is also the Mayor's Statutory Adviser on Health, is leading an expert group for the Commission on healthy lives and reducing inequalities. This group is examining how all sectors, including transport, housing, education, business, the voluntary and community sector, employers and social care and planning can support better health. PHE already co-funds a small team within the Greater London Authority, working on the health aspects of the Mayor's initiatives such as the London Healthy Schools programme and the London Healthy Workplace Charter, as well as transport and planning. Yvonne and I recently met the Mayor and we talked about his unique position in being able to communicate directly with Londoners and how we plan to go even further this year in harnessing that great potential in helping Londoners address their health challenges. PHE London is also working closely with London Councils on a distributed leadership model in sharing our contributions to key health challenges such as mental health, sexual health, building capacity and capability in the workforce, substance misuse and London's resilience.

This integrated approach is being adopted all over the country, from Blackpool to Southend and Bristol to Newcastle and we are beginning to see a tremendous movement among local authorities both to share their experience of what works and to learn from others. This was the 'take away' message from the excellent LGA annual public health conference held in Birmingham last week. Together with the LGA we launched our first case studies [resource](#) which shows how a number of Councils have been using their new powers to improve health and wellbeing. The case studies are drawn from rural and urban environments with varying levels of deprivation and affluence. People seized on these with great interest and the conference programme covered everything from engaging with hard to reach communities, to preventing heat and cold related illness and death and supporting health and wellbeing boards.

And finally, congratulations to our Knowledge and Intelligence teams, led by Dr Julian Flowers, who, in partnership with SapienNitro, have won a prestigious international design [award](#) for our Longer Lives website. We beat intense global competition to win first place in the disruptive technology category of the 2014 Interaction Awards. What is especially impressive was that this recognition was ultimately decided by public vote. Making data available in accessible, relevant and meaningful ways is the gold standard we are aiming for.

With best wishes