



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 19 December 2014

Dear everyone

It is the moment of the year when many of us take time to reflect and I wanted to take the opportunity to share some thoughts on PHE and the public health system as we reach our second Christmas.

The ongoing priority of responding to Ebola, or the floods across much of the country at the beginning of the year, has seen the public health community, within PHE and beyond, rise to the challenge of protecting and reassuring the public in often difficult circumstances, for extended periods of time. I am humbled by the courage and professionalism of our people, and we will never forget that protecting the public is our first duty.

I remain struck by the universally positive way local government has embraced its new duty to improve the public's health and the courage, skill and determination of Directors of Public Health and their teams in adapting to their new circumstances and in making the most of the wider connections and possibilities from being in local government. Even the NAO have this week recognised that PHE has made a good start in supporting them in this. Although there remains much to do to see the shift from illness and treatment to prevention, early intervention and addressing inequalities – ensuring a good start to life, decent work and homes, and for people to eat more healthily, exercise more, drink sensibly and become tobacco free. *Evidence into Action* set out our seven evidence based national priorities and health and wellbeing boards up and down the country are reflecting on these as they refresh their own local plans.

Interdependent with local government is, of course, the partnership with the NHS and many worried that the 2013 reforms would lead to a separation between public health and the NHS. I am delighted that the *NHS 5 Year Forward View*, produced jointly by NHS England, PHE, Monitor, the NHS Trust Development Authority, the Care Quality Commission and Health Education England, has put prevention at the heart of the NHS agenda. This is a first and we should openly celebrate this emphasis on prevention. Included is a new nationwide programme to prevent diabetes, making the NHS a leader in promoting staff health, and the NHS adding its voice to the political debate about the wider actions we need to take to improve health. The next few days will see a significant step forward with the publication of the NHS planning guidance for 2015/16, again produced by all six national partners, for putting the *NHS Forward View* into action. This makes it clear that everyone – Government, the health service, employers everywhere and people themselves – have to get serious about tackling obesity, alcohol and tobacco if we are to help the NHS further cope with demand going forward. PHE will be involved in all aspects of implementing the NHS plan and will lead particularly on prevention.

So, I hope you agree, a good start, and clear set of priorities for the future. I know the year has been a tough one and next year will be no different, with major decisions on our own Strategic Review and on the PHE Science Hub, but please do hear my profound thanks and regard for what each of you is contributing.

I wish everyone a peaceful and happy Christmas break. My thoughts are particularly with those who will be working on Ebola in the UK, in our laboratories and on screening at the major ports of entry, and in Sierra Leone. They are of considerable personal and professional credit to the public health family and their own families and friends who, I am sure, are as proud of them as we are. My next message will be on 9 January.

With best wishes