



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 23 January 2015

Dear everyone

It has been a very good week for the public's health, the most important news being the Government's decision to lay the regulations before Parliament for the introduction of standardised tobacco packaging in England. There is little more to add about the well-established harms caused by tobacco or the pressing need to make smoking less attractive to children. Suffice to say, as a public health measure this is a most welcome moment.

The launch by Public Health Minister Jane Ellison of our collaborative [TB strategy](#) with NHS England on Monday was a practical demonstration of our joint commitment to embedding prevention at the heart of healthcare. The ten point action plan, backed by new investment of £11.5 million, aims to reduce and ultimately eliminate TB across England. The programme will target those most vulnerable to TB by improving access to screening, diagnostic and treatment services as well as creating in five other places of high incidence the Find & Treat mobile health unit that has proved so effective in London.

We had our first hearing before the Public Accounts Committee in the House of Commons on Monday. This was to examine our work in support of local government in their use of the annual £2.8 billion public health grant. Alongside our Finance Director Michael Brodie and myself were Dr Felicity Harvey from the Department of Health and Dr Janet Atherton, President of the Association of Directors of Public Health. There were five recommendations before the Committee, prepared by the National Audit Office, and we have agreed to take them all forward. The [transcript](#) of the hearing, which is a good read, speaks to how our relationship with local government works in practice and – in the context of their overall positive view – how the Committee believes we could do still better. It was a welcome public opportunity to recognise how local government have taken on their new duty to improve the health of their people with universal energy and enthusiasm. As Mrs Hodge, the Chair of the PAC said, this is going in the right direction.

On Tuesday I chaired the very first NHS Prevention Programme Board, promised in the *NHS Five Year Forward View (5YFV)*, bringing together NHS commissioners and providers, NICE, the LGA, Diabetes UK and other voluntary sector partners. This new Board is one of five that will oversee delivery of the 5YFV and our initial focus will be on the introduction of a nationwide diabetes prevention programme – a first in the world at this scale, and a key programme in demonstrating that we can intervene early and prevent the development of conditions that blight individual lives, and place a great burden on families and taxpayers. The Prevention Board will concern itself with the delivery of all the 5YFV commitments on prevention, including supporting the NHS to become an exemplar employer concerned for improving the health of its staff.

Yesterday morning I had the great privilege of meeting our Novel and Dangerous Pathogens training team at Porton to be shown the mock facilities modelled on the mobile laboratories in Sierra Leone and to meet the cohort of volunteers who will be travelling out next week and also those who have just returned and the logistic and support teams for the deployed units. Words cannot sufficiently convey the leadership, courage and logistics that have gone into making all this possible.

And finally, there is an [event](#) on Wednesday looking to encourage more staff to join the Reservists. All three services will be represented and speaking to their contribution to UK Defence and the range of options available to get involved.

With best wishes