



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 24 October 2014

Dear everyone

Thursday saw a pivotal moment in the history of public health when, for the first time, the need for the NHS to focus actively on prevention was formally acknowledged in the [NHS 5 Year Forward View](#), published by NHS England, PHE, Monitor, the Trust Development Authority, Health Education England and the CQC. The *Forward View* makes clear that getting serious about prevention, tackling obesity, alcohol and tobacco and helping us all to live healthier lives is essential both for better health and for a sustainable NHS. PHE has expanded on this message in our own priorities document, [From evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation's health](#), which was purposely published at the same time and should be read in tandem, and sets out how we can make greater progress on obesity, smoking, alcohol, assuring a better start in life, reducing dementia risk and robustly tackling TB and antimicrobial resistance. Both documents put prevention at the very heart of our NHS and public health systems, which will enable us to better manage demand, improve efficiency and tackle funding pressures and we all have something to contribute to this, as individuals, families, society as well as leaders in the health and care system. NHS England, PHE and, crucially, Local Government, will be working to ensure that real progress is made in key areas such as diabetes prevention where a shift in emphasis from treatment to prevention will not only reduce the burden of disease on those who might otherwise have been affected by it, but also enable the redirection of resource to fund other vital services. We will work with the NHS so that it can achieve the ambition of being "an ambassador for health", showcasing for other employers what can be done to support the health and wellbeing of both staff and local communities. And we will stand together to make the case for the evidence-based actions that only Government itself can take.

On the same day, we also launched our evidence-based approach to physical activity, [Everybody active, every day](#), at an event attended by 260 stakeholders drawn from Local Government, the NHS, sport, education, and a wide range of voluntary and community partners, and by Public Health Minister Jane Ellison. Since the 1960s, our overall levels of activity have fallen by 24 per cent and unless we take action, this trend will continue. Lack of activity is implicated in one in six deaths and is responsible for up to 40 per cent of all long-term conditions so being active really is a life saver and we need to work together to get everyone moving more. The Minister emphasised the importance of focusing on what works and accelerating excellence and that this framework is an example of how to go about this in practical and lay terms. She made the point that it is almost impossible to be active and lonely, something that matters throughout life but especially for our elderly. The object is not about extending life for its own sake but about living well for longer.

It is estimated that every year there are around 25,000 excess winter deaths in England, and the sadness is that many of them are preventable. That is why, every year, we join forces with NHS England, the Local Government Association and the Department of Health to publish the [Cold Weather Plan](#), a guide for local government, healthcare professionals and the public to help them take steps to stay warm and well. Much of our advice is just plain common sense – eat hot food, keep active, insulate the home – but there are complex reasons why some people don't manage these. That is why it is so important for people to look out for their friends, family and neighbours, particularly those who are elderly, and take a moment to think whether there is anything they might need that would help protect their health before the cold weather really takes hold.

With best wishes