



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 12 September 2014

Dear everyone

On Tuesday, CMO Professor Dame Sally Davies published her annual [report](#), which focused on population mental health. The 17 scholarly, evidenced chapters cover science and technology, mental health across the life course, the economic case for better public mental health, parity of esteem, needs and safety. Mental illness is the single largest cause of disability and represents 23% of the national disease burden in the UK. It is the leading cause of sickness absence, accounting for 70 million sick days in 2013. The personal costs are, of course, immense, and the cost to the UK economy is at least £70 billion per year. The 14 practical recommendations address important aspects of service, training and civil society and the important role of employers in improving mental health. This seminal report will hopefully accelerate the pace of improvement; we will certainly play our part.

This week Ministers confirmed the public health [grant](#) for 2015/16 at the same level as this year. We do recognise that for those not at their target allocation, no further progress can be made on pace of change this coming year, but Ministers have committed to the long-term goal of moving all local authorities to their target allocation. Given the general pressure to make savings this is, in context, a good settlement. The key message from my visits around the country was the importance of getting the allocations confirmed early for planning purposes and that Local Government uses the third year of the grant to demonstrate the positive impact being achieved on the ground. It is this that will most influence future allocations.

Yesterday we launched a [consultation](#) on our action plan, *Everybody Active, Every Day*, to help get the nation moving more often. This was preceded by over 1000 meetings with and contributions from every conceivable stakeholder. Lack of physical activity is the fourth largest cause of disease and disability in the UK, costing an estimated £7.4 billion a year. We know, for instance, that one in three 11 year olds are already overweight and that within 20 years, without any intervention, one in three adults will be obese. This is a challenge that no one organisation can solve and for which there is no single solution. We need to help ourselves and each other and the consultation reflects the evidence, showing what we can each of us do to make a difference.

We have been working hard over the summer to move our remaining health protection web content to the gov.uk site and it is now live and accessible via the health protection [browser](#). This transition was a huge undertaking, involving moving more than a thousand of our most important pieces of information to their new home, while a similar amount of content currently housed in the National Archive is also being moved across. Inevitably, with an undertaking of this magnitude, there have been gremlins but we are listening carefully to the feedback and our digital team is working to resolve these. My thanks to everyone involved.

And finally, on Monday I spent time with our East of England microbiology team in Cambridge. They work with the Pathology Partnership which now embraces six acute hospitals and our local laboratories and are leading on the transformation of the microbiology services across these hospitals. This really is well ahead of its time and of immense credit to the courage and farsightedness of all those involved. I am very proud of them and what they do.

With best wishes