



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 28 November 2014

Dear everyone

Yesterday the Lancet Commission on Liver Disease, to which our experts had contributed, was published. Deaths in working age people from liver disease have increased 500% since the 1970s. It is currently the third biggest killer of working age adults after ischaemic heart disease and self-harm. And it is a silent killer, with 75 per cent of people with cirrhosis only being diagnosed once they are admitted to hospital. It is also a disease of stark inequalities, as shown in PHE's Liver Disease profiles, published last month, with a fourfold difference in avoidable mortality across local authorities. Liver disease is largely preventable with the three big risk factors being alcohol – for example, a large glass of wine is like three shots of vodka, so it is very easy for people to pour a glass and have no idea how much they are drinking – obesity and viral hepatitis. We also held our first Stakeholder meeting on the forthcoming Liver Disease Framework on Tuesday, at which the wide range of work relevant to liver disease was showcased.

Since launching our Dementia Friends campaign in May, in partnership with Alzheimer's Society, we have made great progress towards achieving our aim of recruiting one million Dementia Friends and helping to create a more dementia friendly society. Over 700,000 people have become Dementia Friends. The number of people with the disease continues to rise – by next year 850,000 people in the UK will have dementia, and we must work together to meet this challenge. People with dementia can live well and independently for many years, as our campaign says, with a little help from their friends – be they family members, neighbours, shopkeepers or bus drivers. Starting this Monday, we will be re-launching our TV [advert](#) which will run throughout December, to encourage even more people to come forward.

Monday saw the launch of the latest wave of Systems Leadership - Local Vision initiatives. Leaders from across ten communities have joined the 40 places who are already delivering profoundly different outcomes as a result of their involvement in this programme. PHE is proud to be one of the sponsors of this work, which enables local leaders to come together to resolve a seemingly intractable health challenge within their community. The new wave is focusing on issues as diverse as improving dementia outcomes, creating the community workforce of the future, and improving outcomes for children and families by involving local people in designing and commissioning services. To find out more please contact debbie.sorkin@localleadership.gov.uk.

Last week also saw the publication of the Early Intervention Foundation [report](#), *Getting it right for families*, to which we contributed, along with local authority colleagues. It provides practical advice for local areas on how they can improve services for families with young children. The way services are organised for these families can be fragmented, resulting in missed opportunities for early identification of need and coordinated support. I hope local authorities and the local NHS will find this a useful resource.

Congratulations to Dr Gina Radford, our Anglia and Essex Centre Director, who is to be seconded from January to the Department of Health as Deputy Chief Medical Officer. This is great personal and professional recognition and a further strengthening of our work with the Chief Medical Officer.

And finally, I will be overseas in South East Asia for the next ten days and my next message will be on 12 December.

With best wishes