



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 4 December 2015

Dear everyone

From tomorrow, we will be standing down our Ebola screening teams at Gatwick and Heathrow airports, although our returning workers scheme will continue to operate for those still on the front line in West Africa. This marks the end of the first phase of our Ebola response, which focused on dealing with the infection itself, both on the ground in West Africa and the protection of people here at home. We are now moving, with the Department for International Development (DFID) and the rest of Government, into the next phase which is supporting the rebuilding of Sierra Leone. We will continue to staff our laboratories there for the foreseeable future, training local professionals and building public health capacity, as well as contribute to research on Ebola survivorship. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the extraordinary work done by our screening teams and laboratory staff at home and abroad. They have selflessly worked round the clock and I am immensely proud of all they have done.

Yesterday the Chief Minister of Punjab, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, visited us to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between PHE and the Government of Punjab, setting out our commitment to work together. It is notable that Punjab province is home to 56% of Pakistan's 180 million population. We will be working in Punjab as one of the main elements of our DFID-funded programme in Pakistan, supporting the Government of Punjab in their ambitions for improved disease surveillance and response. We will also support the development and strengthening of the Institute of Public Health which is based in Punjab. Ties between the UK and Pakistan run deep, and we share common health problems, though different in scale and emphasis. We have a shared desire with our colleagues in Punjab to put prevention at the heart of our strategies and plans. It is hoped that this initial 12 month programme in Punjab, which is part of our overall 18 month commitment in Pakistan, will lead to further collaboration over a number of years.

There is promising news on drug and alcohol services. Our most recent statistics, published yesterday, show some encouraging progress, with over 97% of adults and 98% of young people waiting less than three weeks to access the help they need. However, there is further evidence of an ageing population of heroin users receiving treatment but who have a wide range of health and social problems for whom recovery remains complex. Among young people in touch with services, 84% are experiencing additional problems including mental ill health, self-harming, or not being in education and 12% of girls and 1% of boys reported sexual exploitation. The challenge for local government is to learn from the best around the country in addressing variation and, in doing so, to reach out and engage those who are not so far accessing treatment.

Yesterday I was delighted to launch the University of West England [evaluation](#) of the systems leadership-local vision work. This reflects the work of the 50 or so Health and Wellbeing Board areas who have taken part in the [systems leadership](#) programme and many of them came together yesterday to share their learning from the past three years. I am proud that we helped initiate this work, and am impressed by how much progress has been made. The premise for the work is simple. Local people come together with staff from across the local government and health sectors to tackle a complex problem. They are supported by an enabler, who works with them in their community to help shape what they do using systems thinking. To succeed, they need to work across and beyond organisational boundaries, putting the community outcome before all else and this is exactly what has been happening.

With best wishes