



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 2 October 2015

**Dear everyone**

From yesterday, local government assumed responsibility for commissioning public health services for 0-5 year olds. With its transfer from the NHS, local authorities now lead on all public health services for children and young people, and have the opportunity to put prevention and early intervention at the heart of service provision and to achieve a step change in the health of children, especially those who are most vulnerable. Concurrently, national leadership for 0-5 year olds has moved to PHE from the Department of Health as part of our Best Start in Life programme, one of our seven priorities set out in *Evidence into Action*. The two most important metrics that will speak to the success of this change are 'every child ready to learn by two and ready for school by five'. Our Chief Nurse, Professor Viv Bennett, has been leading a 'week of action' via social media (#BestStart0to19) on getting it right for all our children and young people. This has showcased some of the excellent work already happening in the 0-19 age group, providing a forum for partners to learn more about each other, highlighting the opportunities local leadership can offer for improving children's health and wellbeing, and discussing some of the challenges. Getting it right for our children is the most precious and important factor affecting their health, wealth and wellbeing for the rest of life.

Three million children each year are exposed to second hand smoke when travelling by car. Over 80% of second hand smoke is invisible and it is especially dangerous for children and young people whose airways and lungs are still developing, putting them at greater risk of serious conditions such as meningitis, asthma and cancer. On Thursday, a new law came into force making it illegal to smoke in a vehicle carrying anyone under 18. Even if someone thinks they are being careful by winding down the window there can still be 100 times more hazardous chemicals in the air than is considered safe. No one will want to subject children to this danger and the best thing we can do is to give smokers the support they need to quit for good. Also starting on 1 October was [Stoptober](#), our annual 28-day quitting challenge which offers a range of free advice and support. It has helped thousands of people to quit smoking and people who stop smoking for 28 days are five times more likely to stop for good.

A new resource from our Mental Health Intelligence Network has highlighted the importance of local organisations understanding and acting to improve the mental wellbeing of children and young people. ['Measuring mental wellbeing in children and young people'](#) shows that raising levels of mental wellbeing positively influences a child's ability to learn, their resilience to risky behaviours and their physical and mental health in adulthood. This will hopefully prove to be of practical utility for those working in the field.

Firefighters in England will this year be making 670,000 home safety checks and are extending these into 'Safe and Well' visits. Together with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), NHS England, Age UK and the Local Government Association, PHE has agreed a Consensus statement on how, together, we can reduce avoidable winter deaths and pressures on primary care and A&E. Saving people's lives is the most important thing for firefighters. They have already had astonishing success in reducing deaths from fires and can now bring this experience to bear more widely. They are perfectly placed to spot the dangers facing the most vulnerable when making their many thousands of visits to homes across the country. PHE is working with the CFOA to develop the evidence of their impact on winter related illness through three pilots in Greater Manchester, Staffordshire and Gloucestershire.

And finally, the Secretary of State for Health has sent a personal letter thanking everyone who played a part in keeping the UK safe from Ebola and on the ground in West Africa. PHE stepped up and delivered.

**With best wishes**