



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 26 September 2014

**Dear everyone**

During October we will be publishing our public health priorities, endorsed by the Secretary of State, on which we will be particularly focusing over the coming years. These will be in the seven areas of obesity, smoking, alcohol, dementia, every child getting a good start in life, antimicrobial resistance and tuberculosis. This should be of no surprise as they are connected directly to the evidence on the risk factors affecting premature death and long-term ill health, and to the social determinants so vividly described by Sir Michael Marmot. Along with our priorities we will be setting out a number of new opportunities for the public health system and the NHS to work together to make a real difference. Foremost among these will be the behavioural sciences, digital platforms, big data and transparency, working with employers, a further emphasis on place based decision making and care and, crucially, active leadership from local government and the NHS to work in ways that reflect what people need and want, rather than history, institutions and professions. Our publication will dovetail with the five year forward view for the NHS, also scheduled for October, and we are working very closely with Simon Stevens and others to ensure we share a common narrative about the importance of good health, of prevention and early intervention, and what drives these.

The progress made in reducing the number of deaths from abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) over the last seven years has been absolutely remarkable. Deaths have fallen by two thirds. Our AAA screening programme, led by Mr Jonathan Earnshaw, working closely with the NHS and the Vascular Society, has been pivotal in driving the biggest changes in vascular service provision seen in a generation, with huge benefit. Vascular surgery and radiology is now in fewer, specialist centres; we have a national screening programme; and quality assurance teams working with clinicians to ensure best practice in surgery and radiology is universal. The consequence of all of this is many lives saved and we have moved from having some of the poorest outcomes for AAA repair, to being among the very best.

On Friday last I had the enjoyable task of presenting certificates to the very first students in the country to earn the Royal Society for Public Health Level 2 qualification as Youth Health Champions. The course, undertaken by young people at Manningtree School in Essex, aims to train 14 to 18 year-olds to act as 'health advisers' to their peers on lifestyle choices and risky behaviours, and can take place in a variety of settings including schools, colleges, youth clubs and associations and young offender institutions. I was immensely impressed by their commitment to others and the dedication these young people showed in undertaking this course on top of all their other studies, which is no mean feat.

And finally, on Tuesday PHE, as part of the Cross System Group for Sustainable Development across health care, public health and social care in England, delivered a [joint statement](#) on sustainable development to the UN Climate Summit in New York. We are fully committed to this UN initiative and determined to implement our joint plan to create sustainable, resilient, healthy communities and people through, for example, reducing our carbon footprint, conserving natural resources, and in being better prepared for extreme events. What we do now will affect future generations, and we have a responsibility to do all we can to build sustainable communities and consider the future impact of everything we do.

**With best wishes**