



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 31 July 2015

Dear everyone

Last week I chaired the 5th meeting of the NHS Prevention Programme Board, the group charged with making sure we deliver on our promise to get serious about prevention. The quality of the debate and the commitment from all those who attend gives me great confidence. We are making considerable progress on delivering the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme as we enter into the early phases of a national procurement. We discussed emerging proposals to ensure the NHS showcases best practice as a healthy employer and a healthy environment and to consider how investing in prevention can help close the £22bn gap and create the conditions for a more sustainable future. There is, of course, much more to do, and the board will ensure we keep our focus and deliver results.

We all know that good health has its roots in early life, and is dependent on the chances we have in life. Improving our chances, and tackling the social determinants of ill health are key to a radical improvement in health and wellbeing and closing the gap between the rich and the poor. We have now published our [response](#) to the independent [Due North report](#) which so effectively set out these challenges and the public health agenda to tackle them. Local Authorities across the North have enthusiastically embraced Due North and PHE will continue to support them in taking this forward.

An increase in patient testing and improved access to new treatments will be key factors in the concerted drive to prevent the spread of hepatitis C. Our latest annual [hepatitis C report](#) reveals that hospital admissions from hepatitis C related end-stage liver disease and liver cancer continue to rise. While a small drop in deaths was recorded in 2013, PHE estimates that 160,000 people in England are living with hepatitis C, many of whom are unaware of their infection. However, improvements have been seen in testing and diagnosis with primary care testing having risen by 21% in England in the last five years. The new treatments offer the potential to both prevent spread of infection and to reduce the growing numbers of people with end-stage liver disease and liver cancer provided clear pathways are in place for those who test positive.

I am delighted that PHE with the School and Public Health Nurses Association co-hosted the School Nurses International Conference this week. The event brought together more than 300 delegates from 50 countries across the world to share and learn how best to improve the public health of school age children. Children and young people opened the event and throughout the week engaged in presenting and interviewing delegates. The passion they showed and evoked was inspiring.

We published our [Annual Plan](#) today. The pause for the election delayed this but work is already well underway. The plan complements the *NHS 5 Year Forward View* and the seven priorities we set out last autumn in *From Evidence into Action* – both of which called for a far greater focus on prevention: investing in public health saves lives *and* money.

And finally, you may be interested in looking at our recent [One Health report](#) on human and animal antibiotic use, sales and resistance published with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. This brings together the most recently available UK data on antibiotic resistance in key bacteria that are common to animals and humans to encourage joint working between the sectors, identify emerging threats and improve the surveillance of antibiotic use and resistance in humans and animals.

With best wishes