



Public Health  
England



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 18 July 2014

**Dear everyone**

PHE has been tasked by Parliament to play its part in reducing inequalities and in reaching those in the poorest health fastest. There is, of course, inequity in every community, even within the most wealthy, but the social gradient in health, the health of the poorest, is of particular concern in the North of England. As the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported in 2007, medical care accounts for only about ten percent of the variation we see in health outcomes. Behavioural and lifestyle factors are major contributors in around 50 per cent of all premature deaths. There is a need to address the causes of ill health as well as seeking to cure the consequences. This has inspired the North to come together in a programme, led by the Academic Health Sciences Centre in Manchester, they are calling Well North, a strategically collaborative programme which seeks to tackle the wider determinant complexity of the whole problem, making visible the previously invisible (predominantly inner city) at risk people and attempting to solve rather than only manage their illnesses and anxieties. The programme will pilot innovative approaches to tackling the North's significant health inequalities and premature mortality. Building on early prototype work in Aintree, Liverpool, it will initially also work within three localities in Greater Manchester (Gorton, Salford and Oldham), widely sharing lessons learned, across major cities in the North of England. PHE is partnering Well North in fulfilling our duty on inequalities and, on behalf of the nation, we will be looking to see how this might be, in time, spread more widely.

Physical inactivity is the fourth highest risk factor for non-communicable diseases including dementia, diabetes, and cancer. The people of every nation on earth are slowing down and this is not unconnected to our obesity problem. We need to do more to make it easier for people to be active every day, in schools, workplaces, care homes and hospitals, through everything from sport to dance so that being active again becomes the norm. Over the past two weeks we have co-hosted five regional events on physical activity, in partnership with UKActive, the LGA, PHE Centres and the County Sports Partnership Network, in Birmingham, Cambridge, Bristol, London and Leeds. These brought together over 700 people from local government, the NHS, voluntary and sports and leisure sectors, and the energy and passion for finding ways of encouraging people to become more active every day was fantastic. Health and Care professionals are uniquely well-placed to influence and to make 'every contact count' in persuading people that getting active is good for your health whatever your age or ability. Being active every day can also help people living with long term conditions reduce their fatigue, improve their mental health and keep them living independently for longer. PHE is contributing, for our own staff through our physical activity challenges and promoting active travel, and through our work locally and nationally on a physical activity plan to be launched in October.

And finally, I will be on holiday with my family for the next two weeks and my next Friday message will be on 8 August. For those similarly on leave, I wish you warm weather and sunshine.

**With best wishes**