

Community Figures Pledge to Tackle Health Inequality

LIVERPOOL, UK – 8 March 2007: Fourteen influential people from the worlds of healthcare, the media, education, research, business, the emergency services and community development are to join a unique commission to tackle health inequality and its impact on productivity in the Liverpool city region.

The commission is at the heart of the 'Health is Wealth' initiative, led by the University of Liverpool, which aims to address the growing disparity between the Liverpool city region's fast-growing economy and the long-term poor health of its population which sees people in the area live seven years less than those in the south of England. The project is backed by universities, local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, the NHS, economic development agencies and education and business interests.

University of Liverpool Vice-Chancellor, Professor Drummond Bone, said: "This initiative is a real opportunity to make a tangible difference to the lives of many people in the region. I'm incredibly impressed with the outstanding calibre of individuals who have agreed to give their time to this worthwhile project."

Members of the commission have been drawn from within the region and from outside and include:

- **Susan Woodward OBE (Chair)**, MD of ITV Granada Television, Director of Regional Affairs ITV plc and Deputy Chair of the Liverpool Culture Company
- **Evelyn Asante-Mensah OBE**, CEO of the Black Health Agency, advisor to Government Office North West and Chair of Manchester Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- **Gideon Ben Tovim**, Chair of Liverpool PCT, Senior Research Fellow in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Liverpool and Liverpool City Councillor
- **Robin Currie**, social worker and CEO of Liverpool Personal Service Society, a charity which provides community-based, social and health care services across North West England, central Scotland and North Wales
- **Claire Dove MBE**, CEO of Blackburne House, which offers education and training opportunities for women

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- **Beatrice Fraenkel**, Liverpool City Councillor, Chair of RENEW Northwest, the Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities and Chair of Cosmopolitan Housing Association
- **Duncan Frazer**, MD of Finch advertising agency in Liverpool
- **Bernard Hogan Howe**, Chief Constable of Merseyside Police
- **Anthony McGuirk**, Chief Fire Officer, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- **Professor Ole Peterson**, Professor of Physiology at the University of Liverpool, Vice President of the Royal Society and President of the Physiological Society
- **Professor Cynthia Pine CBE**, Dean of Dentistry at the University of Liverpool and Non Executive Director of Aintree University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- **Sheena Ramsey**, CEO of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Frances Street**, Chair of Wirral PCT, magistrate and member of Merseyside Police Authority
- **Simon Weston OBE**, Falklands veteran and founder of youth charity Weston Spirit

Susan Woodward said: "Liverpool citizens are working hard to transform the way the city looks, does business, encourages ambition and the way it is perceived worldwide – but the rapid growth in the economy means a bigger gap between the rich and poor. That's proven by the stark contrast in people's health. Here, those on low incomes die younger – seven years earlier than those in the South of England. Instead of leading the way in depressing statistics, we want Liverpool to lead the way to help all contribute and benefit from a rejuvenated economy."

The core themes of the 'Health is Wealth' project are aimed at investigating the links between health and sustainable productivity to reduce the current health inequalities in the region and better align the NHS and local authority Public Health agenda with the goals of the business sector. The commission will examine:

- what can be done to achieve greater commitment to improving health among local people and businesses
- how the region can reduce health inequalities and better use the talents that remain underused as a result
- how the region can better exploit its assets as an internationally-renowned centre for health science to the benefit of local people
- what more can be done to maximise the regional economic benefit of the health services sector

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The commission will be supported by a national panel led by Lord Oxburgh, Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology. The panel will act as advisors and contribute their own recommendations based on the commission's findings.

The Liverpool city region is ideally placed for such an initiative with seven teaching hospitals, a world-class medical research portfolio and internationally renowned centres for breast and lung cancer, cardiothoracic services and neurosciences.

The commission will begin its work in April 2007 and report its findings in September 2008. As well as producing clear recommendations for the development of the city region, it is hoped its findings will help inform Public Health policy on a national level.

Notes to editors

1. The Health is Wealth Commission is supported by the following organisations:

- University of Liverpool
- Blackburne House
- Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance
- Groundwork Wirral
- Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust
- Halton Borough Council
- Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Knowsley Primary Care Trust
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool John Moores University
- Liverpool Primary Care Trust
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue
- Merseyside Police
- NHS North West
- Northwest Development Agency
- Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sefton Primary Care Trust
- Silenicus
- St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
- The Mersey Partnership
- Warrington Primary Care Trust
- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
- Wirral Primary Care Trust

More follows ...

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2. Liverpool has a strong legacy of public health, from the passing of the Liverpool Sanitary Act in 1846 to its current status as a founding World Health Organisation Healthy City.

3. Liverpool has one of the largest and most diverse groupings of scientists in the country and is already leading a number of high-profile initiatives on behalf of the Department of Health including the £20 million Medicines for Children Research Network established jointly by the University of Liverpool and the Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust (Alder Hey). The Department of Health has also awarded the University of Liverpool, the Royal Liverpool University Hospital and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine funding to create one of eight national Biomedical Research Centres.

4. The University of Liverpool is one of the UK's leading research institutions. It attracts collaborative and contract research commissions from a wide range of national and international organisations valued at more than £100 million annually.

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