Introduction to Encouraging and enabling physical activity

My name Nanette Mutrie. I’m a professor of Physical Activity for Health at the University of Edinburgh and I direct a Research Centre there on our topic today, Physical Activity for Health. I do a lot of work with the Government, and I’ve been involved in Scottish policy around physical activity for probably 20 years.

Question on screen: Why is it important to raise awareness of physical activity and promote it?

Physical activity is one of those things that everyone knows about and yet no one knows enough about it. If we try to compare it to smoking, I think that might be the best way to go.

Everyone on the street knows that smoking is not good for their health, indeed even people that smoke know that smoking is not good for their health. But people in the street generally don’t know that a sufficient amount of activity is required for them to be healthy, and they might think their doing it, so we need to raise awareness about how much activity is good for health, how to get that activity, (it might not be as complicated as people think), and exactly where you can go in your local area to do that.

Question on screen: What will you gain from completing this learning resource?

Well first and foremost, you will learn about the benefits of physical activity and what the recommended levels of different types of activity are to gain health benefits. And each person doing the learning resource will have to think about their own role.

They might be a health professional, they might be working in a gym, they might be working in a school. It might just be a person of the general public looking at this, and they will learn what the opportunities are and how best to encourage people to be active.

There’s a kind of approach to doing this, an old-fashioned way of health promotion, was that we told people what to do, but this approach is to say, “well, what would you like to do?”; it’s person centred so you’ll learn how to make that approach to people. There’s a particular pathway to guide people to the National Pathway with brief interventions as a start point, or more intensive opportunities for encouragement to be active in that pathway.

My message to anyone taking this module is sitting less and moving more, is a critical public health message. It’s as critical as try to stop smoking. It’s as critical as try to keep within the recommended levels of alcohol consumption. Sit less, move more, will improve individual’s health, they will feel better for it, but it will improve Scotland’s health, and that is a great outcome.