



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 8 January 2016

Dear everyone

Happy New Year. I hope everyone had an enjoyable Christmas break, although I know there was little rest for our staff and partners in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber who were working round the clock on flooding. Whatever the challenges that we individually and collectively face, I know that by working together we can make good things happen and am certain this year will be no different.

Today Dame Sally Davies and her fellow UK Chief Medical Officers, launched an update of the [UK alcohol guidelines](#) advising men and women to drink no more than 14 units each week, the equivalent of six pints of beer or less than five large glasses of wine. The new guidance follows a detailed review of the previous 1995 guidelines, looking at the latest scientific evidence and improved analysis. PHE commissioned this evidence and has supported the work of the expert group which began its review of the guidelines in 2013. The latest review also shows that there is no safe limit of alcohol to drink during pregnancy. These new guidelines make clear the risks of drinking above the recommended level and PHE is currently looking more widely at what affects drinking behaviour. We will be providing a report to Government on how the harms caused by alcohol can be reduced.

One million men in England aged 65 or over have now been screened for Abdominal Aortic Aneurism, a condition involving a swelling of the body's main blood vessel, which can be fatal if left undetected. Since the national screening programme began in 2009, well over 10,000 aneurysms have been detected, the subsequent treatment of which will prevent thousands of premature deaths. It is really encouraging to see high take up of the programme across all regions, and this milestone is a testament to the hard work of screening teams up and down the country.

This week we published our [PHE Research 2014 to 2015: annual review](#). This highlights that 669 peer reviewed articles featured in more than 200 different journal titles, reflecting the huge scope of our remit, and secured £22m of external funding. Most importantly, of course, this research made significant contributions to the evidence base for public health policy and practice.

Our Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign launched this week. You must have seen the television ad and the unprecedented media coverage. The campaign has really captured the public imagination with over 300,000 downloads in the first two days of the new Sugar Smart app which allows people to scan the barcode and see the total amount of sugar in over 75,000 everyday food or drink products. The app is available from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#) and is well worth a look. The campaign has extensive support across the country. Five million sugar smart information packs have been distributed to primary school children and all 152 upper tier local authorities, 20 non-government organisations, 42 housing associations and 500 pharmacies have got involved. The campaign also has the support of 5 major retailers: Asda, Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and the Co-operative Food.

And finally, I congratulate our six staff who were recognised in the New Year's Honours: Dr Tim Brooks and Neil Bentley for their work on Ebola, in West Africa, Professor Viv Bennett for her services to nursing and midwifery, Dr Jenny Harries for her work in leading the Ebola screening programme in England, Dr Eric Rooney for his services to dentistry, and Professor Paul Cosford for his contribution to public health.

With best wishes