



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 11 March 2016

**Dear everyone**

We were delighted that our teams involved in providing and supporting the Ebola laboratory diagnostic services in Sierra Leone have been recognised with an award for their 'special contribution to healthcare science'. Marie Blackman-Northwood and Laura Grice, two of our Senior Biomedical Scientists, collected the award on behalf of everyone at the awards dinner held on Monday last at the Chief Scientific Officers conference. Marie and Laura were among the first to go out to Sierra Leone at the beginning of the outbreak and were instrumental in setting up the PHE laboratories there.

This week we launched '[One You](#)', a new evidence-based campaign designed to reduce health inequalities. The [Global Burden of Disease](#) UK study, published by PHE in the Lancet, revealed that in the past 25 years, there has been little, if any, reduction in the gap between life expectancy for those living in the most deprived areas, and those living in the least deprived areas – that's a gap of eight years for men and seven years for women. Apart from the cost to the individual, their family and friends, this has a huge cost to the economic productivity of the nation. To put this in perspective, more than 10% of the NHS budget is spent each year on preventable illness, that is £11bn. The good news is that this is not inevitable. We know, however, that making healthier choices is not always easy to do – with long working hours, time spent caring for others and the easy availability of high calorie food and drink. One You aims to support people in taking control of their own health, with three important new features. First, it openly recognises the influence of the social environment on health. Second, it helps people to think about stress, and how to reduce this. And third, it makes use of cloud and smartphone capability to allow us to move from advertising to personalised information and support. You may have seen the campaign in the news this week or spotted it on social media. Over 360,000 people have completed our [How are You?](#) quiz so far, which is a really great start.

On Sunday the government published a series of commitments to help tackle dementia, including personalised care plans for every patient from their GP and a new aim for 10% of all people diagnosed with dementia to take part in research. We are also in the early days of developing up to 3 local pilots with Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research UK that will explore ways to increase awareness of dementia risk reduction for adults aged 40-64 through the NHS Health Check. Over the course of the next few years we will work closely on this with national and local partners, and the pilots will be evaluated by the NHS Health Check expert scientific and clinical advisory panel.

The rate of teenage pregnancies has fallen to its lowest level since records began. The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the rate of under-18 conceptions in England has declined by 51% since 1998. This is a huge achievement and shows the impact of a long-term evidence-based approach to a complex public health concern. However, the rate is still higher than comparable European countries, progress varies between local areas and young parents and their children experience disproportionately poor health, education and economic outcomes. We will continue to work with local authorities and their many partners to equip young people to make safe and informed choices and to provide good support for young parents, as part of ensuring every child has the best start in life. This week's [LGA-PHE briefing](#) is well worth a read.

And finally, look out for the latest issue of [Environmental Health](#), which was guest-edited by Healthy-Polis, an international consortium of researchers, scientists, planners and academics, including several staff from our Centre for Radiation, Chemicals and Environmental Hazards.

**With best wishes**