



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 1 July 2016

### Dear everyone

Public health and infectious diseases in particular know no borders and nor do we in fighting them: this means we must remain international in our outlook. Last week's EU referendum result is a major event for the UK but nothing that alters our professional dependence on colleagues from other EU countries and we will do everything necessary to show our support for them as we navigate the coming months and years.

On Monday I hosted the launch of the latest edition of [Health Matters](#) on improving the prevention and diagnosis of bowel cancer. Late diagnosis of bowel cancer means survival chances are poor. Screening aims to catch it early and help make treatment more effective. The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme in England is now in its tenth year. More than 30 million invitation letters have been sent out in that time, followed by a home test kit. Around 18 million kits have been returned, with 25,528 cancers detected. Screening is offered every two years for people aged 60-74, but take up remains low at 56%. This edition of *Health Matters* focuses on ways to prevent bowel cancer through healthy living and how to encourage more eligible people to come forward for screening. We had 130 people calling in to our launch teleconference, including screening and public health professionals, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities. Do share the infographics, slides, case studies and blogs with colleagues.

New [figures](#) released on Wednesday by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show nearly a quarter of all deaths in 2014 in England and Wales were from causes considered potentially avoidable through timely and effective healthcare or public health interventions. Neoplasms (cancers and non-cancerous abnormal tissue growths) were the leading broad cause of avoidable deaths, while ischaemic heart disease was the most common individual cause. The North East of England had the highest rate of avoidable mortality, while the South East had the lowest. 2014 was the first data year to use a [revised definition](#) of avoidable mortality, so we cannot yet see a trend.

Last Friday I spoke at this year's [Healthy Schools London](#) celebration event at City Hall, joining more than 100 London schools collecting their Silver and Gold Awards. Healthy Schools London is an excellent example of schools working to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Educating children to make healthy food choices at lunchtime and creating an environment which encourages them to be active is vital in helping them lead a healthy lifestyle. We know that when children are healthy and happy at school, they can achieve more.

And finally, [Excellence in public health and wellbeing 2016](#), a joint event hosted by the Minister for Public Health Jane Ellison and PHE, took place on Tuesday. The awards celebrate all those unsung heroes leading local action across the country to improve the nation's health and wellbeing, nominated by their peers as well as Members of Parliament and Directors of Public Health. A diverse range of programmes were recognised, from a discussion group for people suffering from mental health issues in Kent to a cross-sector campaign to reduce obesity among children in Birmingham. All those nominated have made a significant contribution to their local communities.

With best wishes