



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

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Dear everyone

The Government's [plan](#) to curb childhood obesity was published yesterday and outlines significant steps to tackle one of the most important issues for the future of our children head on. The plan includes a commitment to introduce a levy on sugary drinks and an ambitious programme to reduce the level of sugar in food and drink, which we are proud to be leading on. Last year we published evidence on the range of actions necessary to have the biggest impact on reducing the amount of sugar in our diet. While the plan does not include all of them, we believe these steps will make a positive difference and we will continue to work with government, our public health partners and the food and drink industry to ensure we do all we can to reduce child obesity in the years ahead.

This week the Government also launched its new [Dementia Atlas](#) – an interactive map of England that allows people to make comparisons about the quality of dementia care in their area. PHE was commissioned to produce this new tool using data and metadata provided by our Dementia Intelligence Network (DIN). The atlas will help to highlight variation so that we as a country can do more to address the gaps and work towards every community being dementia friendly. Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing, and healthier choices in midlife can reduce the risk. This week also sees the launch of the new [NHS Health Check Dementia pilots](#). We are working with Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer's Society to extend the dementia risk reduction component of the NHS Health Check to all 40-64 year olds at sites in Birmingham, Bury, Manchester City and Southampton City. This will see more than 250 GP practices raising awareness about dementia risk reduction as part of the health check.

PHE is urging school leavers to get the [MenACWY vaccine](#) to protect them against meningitis and septicaemia. It's particularly important before starting university in September, where they will be at higher risk from meningococcal bacteria as they mix with lots of other students. Cases have been rapidly increasing year-on-year, from 22 cases in 2009 to over 200 in the past 12 months. Both meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning) are very serious and can kill, especially if not diagnosed early. The new MenACWY vaccination programme introduced in 2015 offers teenagers protection against four meningococcal strains.

PHE [Screening Quality Assurance Services](#) (SQAS) have been successfully working to improve bowel scope screening. Screening to reduce or prevent bowel cancer requires expert endoscopists. They use a short camera and look into the bowel for polyps/adenomas that might develop into cancer. Using research evidence we know that each clinician should find abnormalities in at least 6.8% of their population. This task requires skill and experience and the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP) measures each clinician's performance. This data showed that some were struggling to meet the standard. The SQAS team has supported a number of clinicians through workshops, observation by mentors and further training on particular elements of practice. The majority of clinicians who have received this support are now above the minimum standard, with many performing above the national average. This work will directly increase the number of bowel cancers caught early or prevented.

And finally, the first standardised cigarette pack has been [spotted](#) in Leeds. The UK is the second country in the world to introduce [legislation](#) on standardised packaging of tobacco products, which is evidence-based and a potential 'game changer' in accelerating long-term reductions in smoking among young people.

With best wishes