



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

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Dear everyone

Thank you to the 1,400 delegates who attended the [PHE Annual Conference](#) this week. This year we had 48 sessions, nearly half of them including or led by local government colleagues. A broad range of topics were covered – from pure science, to work being a health outcome, and homelessness and the built environment – reflecting that good health is not only about the NHS. It is also about jobs, housing, education, relationships with friends and family and much else. We also heard from Professor Susan Jebb of Oxford University in her keynote speech on the challenges of obesity, one of the most pressing priorities we face as a country. And we welcomed Sir David King, Special Representative for Climate Change at the Foreign Office, who delivered our inaugural Distinguished Lecture on planetary health. Almost 400 papers and posters were presented, and for the first time, prizes were awarded for the best scientific contributions. Field Epidemiology Training Programme Fellow Dr Dan Todkill received the Early Career Researcher Award for his commitment to health protection and public health research, and a lifetime achievement award was given to Professor Virginia Murray for her contribution to global disaster risk reduction and climate change. Virginia has inspired young people throughout her career and is renowned on the world stage, most recently for her technical work in supporting the [United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#).

The number of people living with cancer increased by 200,000 between 2008 and 2013, according to [new data](#) published this week by PHE's National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service and Macmillan Cancer Support. There were 1.87 million people living with and beyond a cancer diagnosis in England at the end of 2013, an increase from 1.66 million people in 2008. Knowing how many people have or have survived cancer and how this is changing supports implementation of the NHS Cancer Strategy, and especially in taking forward, for our part, those measures aimed at prevention.

Yesterday we made available the latest edition of [Health Matters](#), which focuses on the introduction of standard packs for tobacco products. We are the second country, after Australia, to introduce this powerful measure designed to reduce smoking uptake and prevent a new generation of smokers. The new packs, which are unappealing and feature prominent health warnings, are already appearing in shops and all cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco will come in standard packs by May 2017. Research has shown that smokers using plain packs are more likely to prioritise quitting, and given that the majority want to quit, this is a further golden opportunity for health professionals and local authorities to boost quitting rates. Please do share the infographics, slides, case studies, video and blogs with colleagues.

[Five million people](#) have undiagnosed high blood pressure, known as the 'secret killer'. Diseases caused by high blood pressure cost the NHS over £2 billion every year, and by reducing the blood pressure of the nation as a whole by 5mmHg over 10 years we could avoid £850m of NHS and social care spend and release 45,000 quality adjusted life years. This week Blood Pressure UK has been promoting its [Know Your Numbers](#) campaign, using our [NHS Choices blood pressure tool](#), which provides advice on simple steps to keep blood pressure under control.

And finally, I was impressed to hear this week that 11 Rugby League clubs have signed up to a new initiative from Halton Clinical Commissioning Group and local Rugby League Club Widnes Vikings. In Halton, in the North West, over 30% of primary school children are overweight or obese. The partnership, which will reach 36 schools across Halton in its first year, engages children in physical activity sessions, while also encouraging parents and teachers to be more active. This is public health in action.

With best wishes