



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 31 October 2014

**Dear everyone**

Following on from the publication of *Longer Lives*, a digital tool that enables local government and the local NHS to look in depth at the causes of premature mortality in their areas and across England, on Thursday we launched the next phase of this work, [Healthier Lives: Diabetes](#). As before, there is an interactive 'heat map' but this time including information on prevalence, complications and quality of care by local authority, CCG and general practice. The new tool covers diabetes in depth but also high blood pressure and the Health Check programme. What the data show is a picture of considerable achievement compared with some ten years ago, when diabetes care was a very hit and miss affair, but there is still a huge opportunity remaining to prevent illness and reduce demand for NHS care across the country. The lesson from high quality trials was that good diabetic control prevents complications like angina, renal failure and amputation. Yet still most diabetics do not achieve all treatment targets recommended by NICE. The new tool should be a powerful support to the message from Simon Stevens and also from us, that the NHS needs to focus on prevention and early intervention in everything that it does if we are to see people living well for longer and to ensure that services can cope better with future demand.

World class science is at the heart of our credibility. PHE's work in Colindale on hepatitis E virus (HEV) is at the cutting edge, both in relation to the impact of this virus on the human population and in understanding its spread in animals in the UK and beyond. The virus, which is contracted from certain undercooked foods, causes serious progressive liver disease in people who are immunosuppressed. In partnership with NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), we undertook a study of the potential for transmission of HEV by blood transfusion. This was a world first and provided new and essential information on transmission rates which will be reviewed, together with other findings, by a subgroup of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs.

Our Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit, also in Colindale, together with international partners and the University of Aberdeen, has been awarded a €420,000 contract by the European Food Standards Agency (EFSA) to do whole genome sequencing of strains of *Listeria monocytogenes* from across the whole of the European Union. This will provide an important opportunity to investigate the ability of this nasty foodborne pathogen to persist in the food chain and cause significant illness.

On Wednesday the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) went live. This is a significant development in the 'What Works Network', launched by the Government last year to improve public services through evidence-based policy and practice. With its development team hosted by PHE, this independent Centre, the first of its kind in the world, will identify examples of good practice – what works – in improving wellbeing, and together with the other funding bodies, PHE will be sharing its findings with Local Government, Health and Wellbeing Boards, the voluntary and community sector and business partners. The Centre will also help tackle health inequalities and support the NHS and Local Government in commissioning services that reduce demand on healthcare.

And finally, we are delighted that the Nursing and Midwifery Council has identified PHE as a pilot site for Nurses Revalidation. It is important for patients, the public, and for nurses and midwives themselves to know that they have the necessary up-to-date skills to provide high quality care. We will support our nurses and midwives throughout this process which will put them at the forefront of this important development for their professions.

**With best wishes**