



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 21 November 2014

**Dear everyone**

Often dubbed the silent killer, high blood pressure affects more than 1 in 4 adults and is the second most important risk factor for premature death and disability. Diseases caused by high blood pressure cost the nation more than £2bn each year. This week PHE with partners across local and national government, the NHS, voluntary sector and academia have published [Tackling High Blood Pressure: From Evidence into Action](#), setting out the steps to improve the prevention, early detection and management of high blood pressure. Other countries have had success in this, such as the US and Canada, so we know it can be done.

This week also saw the 4<sup>th</sup> week of action on population health led by nurses and midwives – this time focusing on children and young people's health and wellbeing and with input from young people, parents and a range of our partner organisations. All the evidence shows that a good start to life and in early childhood sets the course for the rest of life. We published recently that on average only 50 per cent of children are 'school ready' at age 5 so there is much to do, but we hope to significantly improve on this as the commissioning responsibility for the 0-5 healthy child programme becomes the responsibility of local government from next October. This will strengthen integration of all NHS and local authority funded support for the youngest children. I recorded a short [video](#) to offer my personal thanks to those who joined in and supported the week and a range of great material has also been posted on [Viv Bennett's blog](#).

As [Stoptober](#) 2014 draws to a close, it is worth a moment of reflection. Smokers joined in huge numbers with over 250,000 signing up for support, 135,000 downloading the Stoptober app and there were over 200,000 YouTube views of our video content. We expect over 160,000 smokers to have made it to 28 days and they are 5 times more likely to quit for good. Every local authority and many hospitals got involved. For example South Gloucestershire Council asked local comedian, Chris Purchase, to promote their four local launch events. They also devised Stoptober lesson plans for local schools and ran Stoptober joke competitions at events. Our campaign also received support from over 50 of the largest national and 200 regional and local employers, providing them with the new Stoptober 'Break the Habit' workplace toolkit, reaching over 1.5 million employees. In addition over 7,500 pharmacies across England supported the campaign with point-of-sale displays. A fabulous effort by everyone.

This week Hertfordshire County Council won the [Personnel Today National Award](#) for Health at Work. This award recognises organisations that can demonstrate how employee health, fitness or wellbeing initiatives are making a positive impact on performance. By focusing on workforce health and wellbeing and by promoting healthy choices, the Council has seen tangible benefits including fewer sick days and increased numbers of staff becoming involved in physical activity and stop smoking sessions. My heartfelt congratulations to the whole of the Hertfordshire team.

And finally, Tuesday was European Antibiotic Awareness Day which highlights the threat to the public's health of antibiotic resistance and promotes prudent antibiotic use. This week our [Antibiotic Guardian](#) campaign reached over 10,000 pledges. If you have not yet pledged to do your part, I urge you to do so.

**With best wishes**