



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 9 January 2015

Dear everyone

Happy New Year. We started 2015 with the welcome news that every newborn baby in England will be offered potentially life-saving screening with the expansion of the NHS Newborn Blood Spot Screening Programme operated by PHE. This now includes four rare metabolic diseases: homocystinuria, maple syrup urine disease, glutaric aciduria type 1, and isovaleric acidaemia. Although incredibly rare, early detection leading to early treatment for those babies and families affected is life changing, preventing disability and, in some cases, death.

Over the Christmas break you will have become aware that an NHS volunteer nurse, who was treating Ebola patients in Sierra Leone, developed the infection on her return to the UK. I know we all wish her well at this difficult time. As the Secretary of State noted in his [statement to Parliament](#) on Monday, PHE's screening arrangements at major ports of entry to the UK provide the best opportunity to ensure that returning staff know who to contact if they develop any symptoms of illness, and he acknowledged that this worked. I have personally written to thank those staff across PHE who have stepped out of their day jobs to provide the screening service, for their commitment and professionalism in contributing to these enhanced screening responsibilities. We of course acknowledge that there will always be ways in which we might improve our protocols and arrangements going forward and we have already strengthened our guidance to support those people in higher risk groups returning to the UK. I also wish to thank all those across PHE who are contributing to the UK response to Ebola in West Africa. These thanks were echoed by the Prime Minister in a letter of appreciation.

We have had an excellent start to the Smokefree Health Harms campaign, *Every cigarette rots you from the inside out*, which launched on 29 December, and was widely covered by the media, achieving so far over 43,000 registrations for Smokefree support tools. This year we are using powerful new images showing how toxic ingredients in cigarettes cause a slow and steady decline in the body. The new online videos have already been viewed half a million times. You may also have seen the news coverage on Monday of our new Change4Life Sugar Swaps campaign, which aims to help families cut down on their sugar intake by making simple swaps at key points in the day, such as breakfast, drinks, after school snacks and puddings. More than 60,000 people have already signed up and will receive a Sugar Swaps pack bursting with tips, vouchers and recipe suggestions to help them and their families cut down on sugary foods and drinks. This year we have had unprecedented support from commercial partners, with hundreds of offers running across supermarkets including Tesco, Co-op, Morrisons, Asda, Aldi and Lidl.

The local authority public health allocations for next year were confirmed just before Christmas, along with details of the pilot Health Premium Incentive Scheme. Successful completion of drug treatment will be the sole national indicator determining which local authorities receive the additional money. This also reinforces a new grant condition seeking year on year improvement in recovery rates. The choice of drug recovery as the indicator was strongly supported in the consultation responses. To support local authorities to see, comparatively, how they are doing we have launched a new digital tool, [Healthier Lives – Alcohol and Drugs](#), make current performance even more transparent.

With best wishes