



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

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**Dear everyone**

On Monday we presented new data at the International Pathogenic Neisseria Conference in Manchester which shows that meningitis and septicaemia cases caused by Meningococcal group B have nearly halved in eligible infants since the vaccine was introduced in 2015. MenB is a rare disease but can have devastating consequences and this vaccine saves lives. Thirty seven cases have been recorded in the eligible age group since the programme began; this compares to an average of 74 cases in the same period from the previous 4 years. This is great news and is the world's first infant programme using this vaccine. Our monitoring also found that over 95% of babies got their first jab and almost 90% the second jab by the age of 6 months.

Overall drug use has declined, but it is still the fourth most common cause of death for those aged 15-49 in England. We also know that the majority of those dying from opiates have either never or not recently been in treatment. Today an independent expert report commissioned by PHE and the LGA outlines principles to tackle deaths from drug misuse after the latest statistics show an 8.5% increase over the past year. Local treatment services are helping many people recover but the report makes clear that there is still more to do and we will work with local government and the NHS to progress this.

Today PHE published the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey data for 2012-2014. The survey looks at the food and nutrient consumption of the UK population. There is a slight dip in the amount of sugar consumed by children, mainly through lower consumption of sugary drinks. While this is welcome, all age groups still consume more sugar than is recommended. The data also show people consume too much saturated fat and not enough fruit and vegetables, fibre and oily fish. Women eat less red and processed meat than before, but men still exceed the recommendations. The health harms that result from a less than ideal diet, especially the overconsumption of sugar, are well evidenced including diabetes and obesity but many more besides. That is why I am proud PHE is leading a programme with industry to remove 20% of sugar by 2020 from the nine food groups most consumed by children, announced in the recent government Childhood Obesity Plan. In parallel, we will continue to work with industry to meet existing salt targets and next year, turn our attention to reducing overall calories in products.

This week, we published guidance, jointly developed with the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) to help clarify the current public health grant conditions and mandated functions in local government. Hopefully this will help local decision makers.

I would like to congratulate Sam Ghebrehewet Head of Health Protection for Cheshire and Mersey, Merav Kliner in our Greater Manchester team, Alex Stewart and their colleagues in the North West who worked on the first health protection textbook to specifically focus on principles and practice. This is a very timely and comprehensive contribution which I am sure will become a key book for public health trainees, specialists and practitioners everywhere.

The British Ambassador visited the PHE laboratory at the FOSAD Research Institute (directed by Professor Kader Konde) in Conakry, Guinea to see PHE and Guinean scientists process and analyse the blood of Ebola virus disease survivors. Ambassador Catherine Inglehearn learnt about the initial results of a five year study to assess the naturally acquired immune response to Ebola virus in survivors and the impact of this information on understanding the efficacy of the new Ebola virus vaccines under clinical assessment in West Africa. The programme includes capacity building activity for Guinean research and public health.

**With best wishes**