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PHE Bulletin, Public Health England's regular update, provides news and information on PHE and the public health landscape for all those concerned with the public's health. For more information, see our website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)

## Public health news

### Health Matters: Harmful drinking and alcohol dependence

The latest edition of PHE's [Health Matters](#) resource for health professionals focuses on effective ways to address alcohol dependency by aligning the whole health system to invest with confidence in evidence-based policies and treatment interventions. [Health Matters: Harmful drinking and alcohol dependence](#) consists of a wide range of online content setting out the scale of the public health challenge, the interventions that work, the business case for action and what stakeholders can do. For more information, read the [public health matters blog](#).

### Zika virus: travel advice for pregnant women

PHE and [The National Travel Health Network and Centre](#) have been carefully monitoring the ongoing Zika virus outbreak and, as a precaution, are advising pregnant women to consider delaying travel to countries with ongoing Zika virus outbreaks. While travellers should take the necessary precautions, in particular for mosquito protection and avoidance, PHE is stressing that any public health risk to the wider population in England is negligible, as the mosquito that transmits the virus is not found in the UK. In October 2015, the Brazilian Ministry of Health reported an unusual increase in the number of babies born with microcephaly (a smaller head than expected which can be due to abnormal brain development) and has suggested a possible link between the increase in microcephaly and the ongoing Zika virus outbreak. For more information, read PHE's [press release](#).

### **Rubella screening in pregnancy to end in England**

PHE has announced that antenatal screening for rubella (German measles) susceptibility for all pregnant women will end from 1 April 2016. The decision to stop screening follows a review of evidence by the UK National Screening Committee in 2003 and 2012. Rubella infection in the UK is at a level defined as eliminated by the World Health Organization. For more information, read the PHE [press release](#).

### **PHE and Chief Medical Officer produce video on antibiotic resistance**

In partnership with the Chief Medical Officer and some of the country's most well-known doctors, PHE has issued a [video](#) to raise awareness of antibiotic resistant infections among parents and to offer them advice on how they can keep their families well this winter. For more information, read the PHE [press release](#).

### **Smoking-related lung disease blights over 1 million lives in England**

Around 25,000 deaths a year in England are attributable to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). PHE has highlighted the debilitating nature of serious lung diseases for which smoking is the biggest preventable risk factor, after the latest GP figures revealed that more than 1 million people are living with it. For more information, read PHE's [press release](#).

### **NHS Health Check Evaluation published in BMJ Open**

Earlier this month British Medical Journal Open published the largest and most comprehensive national evaluation of the PHE managed NHS Health Check programme. [The study](#) presents some positive findings while recognising opportunities for improvement. Researchers from three universities, led by Queen Mary University of London, conducted an observational study over four years (April 2009 to March 2013), analysing research data from 655 general practices across England. The research team reviewed data relating to 214,295 people who attended an NHS Health Check and compared these findings against 1.4 million people who had not yet been offered or taken up their checks. For more information, read the PHE [press release](#).

### **National Cardiovascular Intelligence Network and PHE blood pressure regional hypertension profiles published**

PHE's National Cardiovascular Intelligence Network and blood pressure team have launched a series of [hypertension profiles](#). The profiles show each local authority how well it is doing in detecting and treating high blood pressure by comparing its performance with that of similar authorities and with the rest of England. They also highlight key approaches that can be taken to improve performance and outcomes for the local population.

### **Screening recommendations include new bowel cancer screening test**

The UK National Screening Committee has published a number of recommendations, including improvements to existing screening programmes for Down's syndrome and other related conditions including cervical cancer, bowel cancer and eye screening for people with diabetes. For more information, read PHE's [press release](#).

### **Abdominal aortic aneurysm programme screens one millionth man**

One million men in England aged 65 or over have now been screened for abdominal aortic aneurysm, a condition involving a swelling of the body's main blood vessel in the abdomen, which can be fatal if left undetected. Since the national screening programme began in 2009, well over 10,000 aneurysms have been detected, the subsequent treatment of which will prevent thousands of premature deaths. For more information, read PHE's [press release](#).

### **PHE confirms flu is now circulating**

Latest figures from PHE indicate flu is now circulating in the community, with increases seen for several indicators in particular influenza confirmed hospitalisations among younger adults. The viruses characterised so far this season are well-matched to the vaccine strain. For more information, read PHE's [news story](#).

### **New Dementia Profile launched on Fingertips**

The Dementia Intelligence Network has launched a new [Dementia Profile](#) on the Fingertips database and a dementia [Data Catalogue](#). The profile will, for the first time, enable bespoke comparison between local authorities and clinical commissioning groups in England. It will help commissioners fulfil objectives set

out in the [NHS planning guidance](#) by making information readily available to identify variation, investigate the reasons for any differences and improve outcomes.

### **PHE research**

PHE has published [PHE Research 2014 to 2015: annual review](#). In the calendar year 2014 PHE staff achieved publication of 669 individual peer-reviewed articles. These articles appeared in more than 200 different journal titles, reflecting the huge scope of PHE. The quality of research is also demonstrated by the level of research funding achieved through competitive, peer-reviewed awards. PHE secured £22.1m of external funding for research and related activities during financial year 2014/15. This research made significant contributions to the evidence base for public health policy and practice.

### **Updated child obesity data slide set available**

PHE's recently updated [child obesity slide set](#) contains the latest National Child Measurement Programme and Health Survey for England data. Key information on child obesity is presented in clear, easy to understand charts and graphics.

### **Spend and Outcome tool updated**

PHE has now further updated the [Spend and Outcome tool \(SPOT\)](#), with the local authority out-turn data for 2014/15. This tool gives an overview of spend, outcomes and expenditure across key areas of business. The SPOT tool allows the identification of areas requiring priority attention where shifts in investment may optimise local health gains and increase quality.

### **PHE staff recognised in New Year's Honours list**

Six PHE staff were recognised in the New Year's Honours. They are Dr Tim Brooks, director of PHE's Rare and Imported Pathogens Laboratory, and Neil Bentley, head of Microbiology Technical Services, for their work on Ebola in West Africa; Professor Viv Bennett, Chief Nurse for her services to nursing and midwifery; Dr Jenny Harries, director for the South of England for her work in leading the Ebola screening programme in England; Dr Eric Rooney, consultant in dental public health, for his services to dentistry; and Professor Paul Cosford, Medical Director and Director for Health Protection, for his contribution to public health. For more information, read PHE's [news story](#).

## Honours nominations 2017

[Guidance and a form](#) to nominate someone who works in the health and social care sector for a New Year or Queen's Birthday Honours is now available. The deadline for nominations is Wednesday 24 February.

## Recent PHE blogs

[Rise of new psychoactive substances: new toolkit helps prisons address a growing problem](#)

by Rosanna O'Connor (5 January)

[Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm \(AAA\) Screening Programme – an important milestone](#)

by Anne Mackie (6 January)

[Preventing suicide – what can local authorities do?](#)

by Kevin Fenton (7 January)

[Health Matters – your questions on antimicrobial resistance](#)

by Blog editor (7 January)

[Vector borne diseases in the 21st century](#)

by Jolyon Medlock and Alexander Vaux (8 January)

[Preventing musculoskeletal disorders has wider impacts for public health](#)

by Kevin Fenton (11 January)

[Dementia and the importance of local data](#)

by John Newton and Charles Alessi (12 January)

[Tackling high blood pressure at local level](#)

by Lorraine Oldridge and Matthew Kearney (18 January)

[Ebola: on the ground in West Africa](#)

by Blog editor (19 January)

[Health Matters: harmful drinking and alcohol dependence](#)

by Kevin Fenton and John Newton (21 January)

[Health Matters: Your alcohol treatment services toolkit](#)

by Rosanna O'Connor (21 January)

[How food procurement can make a climate difference](#)

by Louis Levy (22 January)

[How and when is cancer diagnosed?](#)

by Lucy Ellis-Brookes (25 January)

## Campaign News

### **New Sugar Smart campaign launched**

This month saw the launch of the new [Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign](#) encouraging families to cut back on sugar and providing easy-to-follow tips and advice on how to do this. The new Sugar Smart app, available on the [Apple Store](#) or [Google Play](#), helps parents see how much sugar there is in everyday food and drink to keep families informed about the sugar in their shopping basket and cupboards. Change4Life has also created [short film](#) to warn parents about the health harms of eating and drinking too much sugar, including becoming overweight and tooth decay. For more information, read the [press release](#).

## News from other organisations

### **NICE updated tuberculosis guidance will help target most vulnerable**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's updated [tuberculosis \(TB\) guidelines](#) call for greater education and prevention to help target people from socially deprived backgrounds who are most vulnerable to developing the infection. The guideline recommends raising and sustaining awareness of TB and aims to improve ways of finding people who have TB in the community. For more information, read the NICE [news story](#).

### **Charity announces bowel cancer diagnosed earlier through screening**

Cancer Research UK (CRUK) announced that bowel cancer is more likely to be diagnosed at the earliest stage if it is picked up by screening. This used new [PHE data](#) that, for the first time, shows the stage at which cancer is detected by the different routes to diagnosis – such as screening, GP referral or as an emergency.

This new analysis has given new insights into the diagnosis of over half a million patients with cancer. For more information, read the CRUK [news story](#).

### **Chief Medical Officer publishes alcohol guidelines for consultation**

Earlier this month updated [CMO alcohol guidelines](#) were published for consultation. The proposed new guidelines state (among others) that there should be single guideline of 14 units a week for both men and women. The announcement was made alongside the publication of the Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC) [statement on alcohol consumption and risk of cancer](#).

### **New film helps managers respond to safety concerns**

[Responding to Concerns](#), a new educational film that aims to equip staff with the knowledge, skills and confidence to adequately and safely respond to patient safety concerns, has been launched by Health Education England.

### **New NHS England action plan to help tackle 'silent killer' sepsis**

NHS England has published a [new action plan](#) to help support healthcare professionals to recognise and treat sepsis promptly. Earlier this year NHS England brought together Royal Colleges, the UK Sepsis Trust and others to advise on how best to improve the recognition and treatment of sepsis. This new action plan sets out what we need to do to drive improvements for patients with sepsis.

### **New Permanent Secretary announced for the Department of Health**

Chris Wormald has been [appointed as the new Permanent Secretary](#) for the Department of Health, following Dame Una O'Brien's recent announcement that she is to step down from the role. Chris will move across from his current role of Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education.

## Events

### **PHE Board's next open meeting**

The next open meeting of the [PHE Board](#) is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 24 February, focusing on public health approaches to end of life care. Meeting [details](#) will be available online.

### **The NHS Health Check conference registration open**

Registration is now open for the [NHS Health Check Conference 2016](#) on 1 March 2016 at the Kia Oval in London. Speakers include Duncan Selbie, PHE's Chief Executive, and Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS England's Medical Director. There will be a series of workshops exploring different aspects of the programme. The conference is aimed at professionals involved with commissioning, providing, evaluating and supporting the NHS Health Check programme.

### **National seminars: creative commissioning for better outcomes**

The Cultural Commissioning Programme, supported by PHE, the Local Government Association and the Royal Society for Public Health, has organised Arts Council England seminars for leaders, managers and commissioners of public services. Places can be booked in [London](#) on 13 April, [Torquay](#) on 28 April and [Birmingham](#) on 17 May.