



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 30 September 2016

Dear everyone

Yesterday we launched our Sugar Reduction Programme with a briefing event for food manufacturers, retailers, NGOs and other stakeholders, fronted by the Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt. This included an extended Q&A about how we will take forward our objective of taking 20% of sugar out of the nine leading food groups that contribute most to the amount of sugar children eat. Reformulating food was a key area for action from our independent [evidence review](#) and it is great to get this underway.

This week the BBC has been [covering](#) an initiative launched by a local GP to champion public health and improve health outcomes in his community. On average, people in Fleetwood, Lancashire, die relatively younger compared to other more affluent areas, often from preventable illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Dr Mark Spencer has forged a coalition of local people and health workers to take a new approach to helping people make positive changes to their health, including educating school children about food and diet, working with local sports clubs to encourage people to get active, and creating more open green spaces. The BBC will follow Fleetwood's progress over the year, working with local partners including the local council, PHE, NHS England, and the voluntary sector.

We marked World Heart Day yesterday with a new and improved version of the [Heart Age tool](#), alongside [new data](#) showing that four in five (79.2%) people over 30 in England have a heart age older than their chronological age, making them more at risk of a heart attack or stroke. Making heart health information more accessible to those at risk is important to help increase take up of the NHS Health Check and the Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme – an integral part of our plan to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in years to come.

Good news on TB. On Tuesday the new [Tuberculosis \(TB\) in England 2016 report](#) revealed a year-on-year decline in TB cases over the past four years, down to 5,758 in 2015. For the first time there has been a sustained reduction in UK born as well as non-UK born cases indicating reduced transmission in England. In the past year the decrease has been seen in all areas, due to pre-entry TB screening, systematic latent TB infection (LTBI) testing and treatment, fewer migrants from countries with high levels of TB and improvements in TB control measures. However, the number of cases linked to homelessness, drug or alcohol misuse and imprisonment has not declined, and over a quarter of TB cases in 2015 waited more than four months from the onset of symptoms to start treatment. So there is more to do to see the eventual elimination of TB in England, but that remains our ambition and we are working closely with NHS England, who continue to put expertise and resources behind this major public health priority.

On Tuesday, the Academy of Medical Sciences published [Improving the health of the public by 2040](#), calling for a radical upgrade in the UK's approach to public health research. Innovative methodologies, robust assessment of new technologies, a workforce with the right skills and increased collaboration among agencies is essential to fully address the complex challenges facing the nation over the next 25 years, from rising obesity to environmental and economic change. This is a welcome acknowledgement of the need for a system that works well together and we will now carefully consider the report's recommendations.

The first [Radiation Protection Week](#) was held in Oxford last week, led by PHE's Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards. It attracted delegates from over 30 countries as well as major international bodies. Discussions covered the latest developments and future research priorities to improve and promote high standards of health protection from ionising radiation in Europe and internationally.

With best wishes