



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

## Friday message

Friday 17 July 2015

**Dear everyone**

Today has seen a seminal moment in the nation's relationship with sugar, following the Government's acceptance of the recommendation by the independent Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) to halve the maximum amount of free sugars we consume each day, from 10 per cent to 5 per cent. Children are currently consuming three times this amount. SACN's [report](#) is the first in-depth review to be conducted in the UK in over two decades on the impact carbohydrates, sugar and fibre have on health outcomes. We are all too familiar with the devastating health impacts of obesity, and the threat to our children's future health with one fifth of children being obese by the age of 11 and almost two thirds of adults being overweight or obese. Too much sugar also increases the risk of tooth decay and, shockingly, the leading reason for admission to hospital for children is to have teeth removed under anaesthetic. The Government does not lightly change its dietary advice to the population and the significance of its acceptance of the recommendations cannot be overstated. PHE has been examining the evidence from around the world on the most effective actions that can be taken in the areas of marketing and advertising, reformulation and fiscal measures, among others, to reduce sugar consumption. This evidence review will inform the Government's developing policy on childhood obesity and will be published in due course.

Congratulations to Victoria Targett, who heads up our sugar reduction team, who has been honoured with the World Hypertension League Notable Achievement Award 2015 for her work on dietary salt reduction at the population level. Congratulations also to Jamie Blackshaw, leader of our obesity and health weight team, who has been awarded the Public Health Nutrition Medal 2015 by the Nutrition Society. The medal recognises leadership in public health nutrition and acknowledges the wide contribution Jamie has made to a variety of nutrition topics across his career in the Food Standards Agency, the Department of Health and now in Public Health England.

The Public Health Genomics Foundation, a leading health policy think-tank, published a report last week, *Putting Pathogen Genomics into Practice*. The report highlighted PHE as being at the forefront of efforts to put whole genome sequencing of pathogens into front line use. Our Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit was acknowledged for its world leading use of pathogen genomics to improve the detection and investigation of foodborne infectious disease outbreaks. Two studies were featured, one where pathogen genomics was able to disentangle two overlapping outbreaks of *E. coli* O157, demonstrating how genomics can help trace the source of contamination in a complex epidemiological situation. The other study involved the first use of the handheld MinION sequencer to investigate a local outbreak of Salmonella in Birmingham. The Salmonella genome analysis by the reference laboratory demonstrated that this local incident, together with several other outbreaks, were part of a larger international Salmonella outbreak and this in turn provided valuable microbiological evidence which enabled the origin of the contamination to be tracked back to a continental egg supplying company.

And finally, on Wednesday we published our [annual report](#), which reflects some of our work over the past year and how we have organised ourselves and our service delivery. We also published a [review](#) of our social marketing programmes as well as a forward look. Both reports, we think, are worth a read.

**With best wishes**