

## [News story: Successful workshop on allergen detection in spices organised by GC](#)

A joint Defra, FSA, FSS and Government Chemist workshop was held at LGC on 28 February 2018. The event focused on the detection of allergens in spices and herbs using a multi-discipline approach. The workshop was attended by over 20 delegates from Public Analyst laboratories, industry and regulating bodies.

The event was organised by the Government Chemist team as part of a cross government (BEIS, FSA, FSS and Defra) knowledge transfer project that will deliver knowledge from government programmes to stakeholders to help enforce current regulations and prevent future disputes. By pooling funds from each of the four government departments, knowledge transfer events can be planned and coordinated according to priorities received directly from the stakeholder community delivering greater impact.

The workshop was opened with a talk by Dr Chun-Han Chan from the FSA's Allergen team and followed by Greg Corbishley from Barts Spices, who gave the industry perspective into the challenges posed for manufactures by cross contamination. There were also three sessions covering the complementary techniques developed in response to the [cumin](#) and [paprika](#) cases in 2015. Malvinder Singh (LGC) talked about the immunoassay tests which initially detected allergenic contamination (initially believed to be almond) in cumin and the subsequent preparation of reference materials needed for further investigation. Christopher Hopley (LGC) gave an overview of mass spectrometry and expanded on methods developed for the detection of close species. Timothy Wilkes (LGC) talked about the real-time PCR and melting curve approaches used for these cases. These sessions provided practical information required to enable participants to carry out or commission similar analytical tests. Michael Walker, from the GC team, provided a final overview on result interpretation and reporting on allergen cases.

Dr Walker from the GC team presenting on interpretation and reporting

Feedback from participants was very positive:

First of all many thanks to you all for a very enjoyable course on Wednesday. The content was very useful and I feel the chance to network with such a diversity of people and disciplines that attend these courses is invaluable

Very informative and enjoyable. Always good to have access to a large pool of experts. Confident now to use melt curve analysis in future

If you would like to know more about the techniques covered in this workshop, or the work of the Government Chemist, contact

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## **Press release: CEO Sir Alan Massey retiring after four-decade maritime career**

Sir Alan joined the MCA in July 2010 after a 33-year career with the Royal Navy, where he left as Second Sea Lord.

During his eight-year tenure, Sir Alan has successfully steered the MCA through changes to modernise Her Majesty's Coastguard, new arrangements for the UK's search and rescue helicopter capability, a transformed survey and inspection capability and a more commercially-responsive approach to how the UK Ship Register operates. Sir Alan will continue his role until late 2018, to allow the appointment process for a successor to take place.

Bernadette Kelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Transport said: "I want to thank Sir Alan for his leadership of the MCA and his tireless commitment to improving safety at sea for all and supporting the UK's maritime interests. I know that he will continue to make an exemplary contribution to the MCA and its ambitious plans until he leaves his post later this year."

Sir Alan said: "It has been an immense privilege to work for the MCA and serve the public. I am extremely proud of what we have achieved. Whilst this has been a difficult decision for me to make, I feel that now is the right time for a new Chief Executive to bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and initiatives to the Agency. I'm confident that the MCA will continue to successfully deliver its objectives under new leadership. I will continue to lead the MCA with my full commitment and energy until my successor is found and is ready to take over towards the end of this year."

The Department of Transport will launch a competition to recruit a new Chief Executive on Monday 19 March.

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## **Press release: Return-to-work**

# placements for scientists and engineers at Dstl

Dstl, part of the Ministry of Defence, has teamed up with Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology (IMarEST) and the Women's Engineering Society (WES) to pilot the [STEM Returners programme](#). The programme is aimed at giving experienced science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) professionals the confidence to step back into their careers after time taking off or the opportunity to transfer into another field.

Natalie Desty from the STEM Returners programme, said:

The science and engineering industry has a shortage of skilled workers, but many highly qualified and experienced people are struggling to get back into work. We want to change employers' perceptions of CV gaps, remove barriers to returning to work and ensure the widest possible pool of talent is being considered for jobs. For example, female professionals returning from career breaks are often underemployed, with three in five likely to move into lower-skilled or lower-paid roles.

The Dstl pilot is open to any gender and offers individuals a paid 12-week placement, where they will work on challenging projects that make a real difference to the UK's defence and security. Successful applicants could work in areas such as platform systems, cyber and information systems, or defence and security analysis. Placements are also available with the [Defence and Security Accelerator](#), which manages the £800 million Defence Innovation Initiative.

As well as contributing to exciting and rewarding projects, the programme offers 1-to-1 mentoring, networking opportunities and further career support.

Helen Christie, Dstl Resourcing Specialist said:

We're thrilled to be involved in the STEM Returners programme and help break down barriers people face when coming back to work. Dstl has long been committed to a flexible and supportive workplace so that talented people of all backgrounds and circumstances can thrive here and contribute to our country's national security.

While we can't guarantee a permanent position with Dstl at the end of the placement, it's equally important that the wider science and engineering community is full of skilled and experienced people. About half of Dstl's work is delivered externally through industry, universities, and small-and-medium-sized enterprises, so we rely on being able to collaborate with STEM workers all over the UK. We hope by participating in the programme, we can help grow the STEM

workforce.

Dstl is also part of the STEM Futures consortium, which is proud to embrace the STEM Returners programme as part of its overall intent to develop talent while actively championing diversity and inclusion.

Interested? [Apply now.](#)

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## **Statutory guidance: SR2017 No1: Unintentional receipt of radioactive materials and radioactive waste by the operator of any facility which uses a radiation detection system**

These rules allow operators of radiation detection systems under a standard permit to keep radioactive materials and accumulate radioactive waste and, after it has subsequently been characterised and quantified, to dispose of the waste by transfer to operators who are themselves permitted to receive and dispose of radioactive wastes of that type and quantity.

[Application form and guidance](#)

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## **Press release: PHE publishes latest data on nation's diet**

The figures from the latest [National Diet and Nutrition Survey \(NDNS\)](#) collected from 2014 to 2016 show:

- sugar makes up 13.5% of 4- to 10-year-olds, and 14.1% of teenagers' (11- to 18-year-olds) daily calorie intake respectively; the official recommendation is to limit sugar to no more than 5%
- 4- to 10-year-olds consume two thirds of the amount of sugary drinks they did 8 years ago – down from 130g per day in 2008 to 2010 to 83g in 2014 to 2016
- for teenagers, sugary drink intake is more than double that of younger children (191g) even though consumption has decreased by 30%; sugary

drinks remain the main source of sugar (22%) in their diets

The survey confirms the UK population continues to consume too much saturated fat and not enough fruit, vegetables, and fibre:

- average saturated fat intake for adults (19 to 64 year olds) is 12.5% of daily calorie intake, above the 11% recommended maximum
- adults consume on average 4.2 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, 65- to 74-year-olds consume 4.3 portions and teenagers consume just 2.7 portions per day
- only 31% of adults, 32% of 65- to 74-year-olds and 8% of teenagers meet the 5 A Day recommendation for fruit and vegetables
- average fibre intake in adults is 19g per day, well below the recommended 30g per day

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at PHE, said:

Poor diets are all too common in this country and, along with obesity, are now one of the leading causes of disease such as cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. It's clear from these data that the nation's diet needs an overhaul.

A healthy balanced diet is the foundation to good health. Eating 5 A Day and reducing our intake of calories, sugar, and saturated fat is what many of us need to do to reduce the risk of long term health problems.

The data underscores PHE's call for the population to follow a healthy balanced diet, based on the [Eatwell Guide](#), which includes eating at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables per day, increasing consumption of oily fish and fibre and limiting the amount food high in saturated fat, sugar and salt.

Following a healthy, balanced diet and reducing calories will help reduce obesity and the economic and social burden of its consequences.

1. The NDNS rolling programme is a continuous cross-sectional survey, designed to assess the diet, nutrient intake and nutritional status of a representative sample of around 1,000 people per year (500 adults and 500 children) from the general population aged 18 months upwards living in private households in the UK. The NDNS comprises an interview, a 4-day diet diary and collection and analysis of blood and urine samples. Results are used by government to monitor the diet and nutritional status of the population, to provide the evidence base for policy development and to track progress towards public health nutrition objectives such as reducing sugar, saturated fat and salt intakes. This report covers data collected over a 2-year period – from year 2014 to 2015 to year 2015 to 2016.

2. Work to deliver years 7 and 8 of the NDNS rolling programme was carried out by NatCen Social Research and the Medical Research Council Elsie Widdowson Laboratory (formerly known as MRC Human Nutrition Research).
3. The last [NDNS report](#) covering years 5 and 6, (2012 to 2013; 2013 to 2014) was published in 2016.
4. Reference to poor diets being one of the leading causes of disease: [Newton JN et al \(2014\)](#) – Changes in health in England, with analysis by English regions and areas of deprivation, 1990 to 2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013. [Lancet 386\(10010\):2257-74](#).
5. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) advice is to limit free sugars to no more than 5% of daily calorie intake:
  - adults should have no more than 30g of free sugars a day, (roughly equivalent to seven sugar cubes)
  - children aged 7 to 10 should have no more than 24g of free sugars a day (six sugar cubes)
  - children aged 4 to 6 should have no more than 19g of free sugars a day (five sugar cubes)
  - there is no guideline limit for children under the age of 4, but it's recommended they avoid sugar-sweetened drinks and food with sugar added to it

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