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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

Public health news

PHE and NHS England launch joint £11.5m strategy to wipe out TB

PHE and NHS England have announced an £11.5 million investment as part of a collaborative initiative to decrease tuberculosis cases and ultimately eliminate TB as a public health problem in England. The joint [Collaborative tuberculosis strategy for England 2015-2020](#) contains ten evidence-based areas for action. In 2013, there were 7,290 TB cases reported in England, an incidence of 13.5 cases per 100,000 of the population. The UK has the second highest rate of TB among Western European countries and rates are nearly five times higher than in the US. Combatting TB is a national priority for PHE. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

New tool models youth smoking variation across England

New figures released this week estimate smoking rates among young people in local areas for the first time. Commissioned by PHE and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and modelled by the University of Portsmouth and the University of Southampton, the figures, available on the [PHE Local Health website](#), are estimates of youth smoking rates for every local authority, ward and local NHS level, based on factors known to predict smoking in young people. Nationally an estimated 13% of 15 year olds are regular or occasional smokers, but the data shows considerable variation between areas. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Ebola news: PHE to be funded to co-ordinate development of a rapid diagnostic test for Ebola

The European Union has announced that it will be funding PHE to co-ordinate a consortium of public and private sector scientists to develop a rapid diagnostic test for Ebola. The project is led by PHE scientist Miles Carroll, head of research microbiology services for PHE, and will pave the way for rapid diagnostic tests capable of delivering reliable results at the point of care in as little as 15 minutes.

Three new laboratories staffed by PHE are [now up and running in Sierra Leone](#) and helping to identify new Ebola cases. PHE is continuing to provide new and updated information for professionals, travellers and people from the affected West African countries and for the general public in its [Ebola virus disease: clinical management and guidance](#) collection.

Public health nursing and midwifery leadership transfers to PHE

The Department of Health and PHE have announced that responsibility for public health nursing and midwifery leadership will transfer to PHE from April, replacing the current joint arrangement between the department and PHE. Viv Bennett will continue her public health leadership role as PHE's Director of Nursing and Midwifery and also as the government's principal advisor on public health nursing. The Department of Health will also establish a Nursing and Midwifery Policy Unit to make sure clear strategic messages are being delivered. This unit will be led by Dr David Foster. For more information see PHE's news story.

PHE to reconfigure its centres

As part of a review of its working arrangements, PHE is reconfiguring the footprint of its local centres and fully aligning them with how local government organises itself. For more information see Duncan Selbie's latest [Friday message](#).

PHE issues a further cold weather alert

The Met Office has today issued a Level 3 cold weather alert across Yorkshire and Humber, West Midlands, North East and North West England. This period of cold weather is expected to last until 5 February. Everywhere else is now on a Level 2 alert. The Level 3 alerts are issued when severe weather is occurring. This is when average temperatures have dropped to 2°C or below, and/or widespread ice and heavy snow is present. Level 2 alerts are issued when there is a greater than

60% chance that we will see this weather within 48 hours. For more information and advice, see PHE's [press release](#).

Flu levels steady in recent weeks after an earlier rise

Latest figures from PHE show that flu levels in England are now levelling off after earlier rises. Overall, levels are now higher than the peak of flu activity observed in the last three seasons, but have not reached the levels seen in the last notable seasons of 2010 to 2011 and 2008 to 2009. Latest flu vaccine uptake figures from PHE show some positive signs, with more than 72% of people aged 65 and over vaccinated. However 50% of those aged under 65 with a health condition have been vaccinated with the rate for of pregnant women at under 44%. For more information see PHE's 9 January 2015 [press release](#) and PHE's latest [flu report](#).

Londoners urged to vaccinate their children against flu

PHE is urging parents in London to ensure their children are vaccinated against flu, if they are eligible. All two, three and four year old children are entitled to a free flu vaccine but current vaccination rates for this age group in London are less than 30%. Rates of flu had been increasing in London with the current rate of reported 'influenza-like-illness' slightly higher than the England rate. Some London boroughs are experiencing much higher rates, indicating that flu season is well underway in the city. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Government backs standardised packaging of tobacco

Public Health Minister Jane Ellison confirmed last week that the government proposes to lay regulations in this Parliament for standardised packaging of all cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco for retail sale. The proposal is to allow for the regulations to come into force at the same time as the European Tobacco Products Directive in May 2016. Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will need to confirm whether they consent to the regulations applying to those parts of the UK. For more information see the Department of Health [news story](#).

Recommendation against national dementia screening

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) has upheld its recommendation against screening everyone aged 65 and over for dementia. Following an extensive review of the evidence, the committee concluded that the current test for dementia does not accurately identify those people who have dementia and those

who do not. To recommend screening, the committee would need to be confident that by acting early, treatments would slow or even prevent this serious disease but these treatments do not exist. The UK NSC also recommended against national screening for Gaucher disease, bacterial vaginosis and preterm labour (premature birth). For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

PHE report encourages organisations to address the health needs of young people

PHE has published an [Improving young people's health and wellbeing framework](#) to address the health needs of young people. PHE continues to see poorer outcomes for young people in England when compared to many other high-income countries. Teenage birth and abortion rates remain among the highest in Europe and the proportion drinking alcohol is still well above the European average. Inequalities also persist, with poor health outcomes more common among the poorest young people. PHE has set up a [web area](#) for local areas to find out the state of young people's health in their localities. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

New workbooks to support the NHS Health Check programme

New NHS Health Check [workbooks](#) developed by PHE and Skills for Health have been published to help improve standards on the programme. The NHS Health Check learner and assessor workbooks accompany the [NHS Health Check competence framework](#) that was published in June 2014. The workbooks support commissioners or providers of the NHS Health Check to assess and evidence their staff's competence against the national occupational standards set out in the [NHS Health Check competence framework](#).

PHE supporting local council tobacco control

PHE is offering a £1,000 discount to councils undertaking a CLearR peer assessment. The [CLearR model](#) supports local authorities to review their current tobacco control efforts, and identify actions to further reduce smoking rates. To receive the discount on the usual £2,500 fee for peer assessment, local authorities must apply before 31 March 2015 and must have arranged for their assessment to be completed before 30 June 2015. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Segment tool updated

PHE's [Segment tool](#), which provides information on the causes of death that are driving inequalities in life expectancy at local area level, has been updated. The update provides data for a more recent time period (2010 to 2012) and also incorporates user feedback on the first version of the tool. Changes include the addition of data for lower tier local authorities and data on the contribution of alcohol related mortality to inequalities in life expectancy.

Newborn blood spot screening expanded

PHE's NHS Newborn Blood Spot Screening Programme has been [expanded](#) to screen all newborn babies in England for four rare metabolic diseases. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

PHE publishes report on substance misuse treatment for young people

New data on young people's substance misuse treatment shows that specialist services in England continue to work well. A [new report](#) contains the latest statistics on specialist substance misuse treatment for young people in England during 2013 to 2014. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Recent PHE blogs

[Screening babies for more rare diseases](#)

by Anne Mackie (23 January 2015).

[Tackling tuberculosis](#)

by Ibrahim Abubakar (22 January 2015).

[Look out for others as the temperature drops](#)

by Angie Bone (16 January 2015).

[The flu detectives: solving a crime before it happens](#)

by Richard Pebody (15 January 2015).

[Why leisure industry professions are crucial in promoting active lifestyles](#)

by Justin Varney (12 January 2015).

[Preventing bloodborne virus exposure from workplace injuries](#)

by Melvina Woode Owusu (5 January 2015).

[UK Ebola case: What does this mean for people in the UK?](#)

by Paul Cosford (30 December 2014).

People news

New chair of Pharmacy and Public Health Forum announced

PHE has announced Councillor Jonathan McShane as the new chair of the Pharmacy and Public Health Forum (PPHF), following Professor Richard Parish stepping down from the role at the end of last year. The PPHF, accountable to PHE, is leading on further expanding pharmacy's contribution to public health. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Dr Gillian Davies recognised in New Year Honours List

Dr Gill Davies, specialist in dental public health, Greater Manchester Centre and the Dental Public Health Intelligence Team, has been awarded an MBE. Gill joined PHE in April 2013 and was on the team that created, updates and publishes [Delivering Better Oral Health, an evidence based toolkit for prevention](#). Gill also helped to lead the national dental epidemiology programme. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Campaigns news

Be Clear on Cancer - oesophago-gastric campaign

PHE is running the first national oesophago-gastric cancer campaign under the Be Clear on Cancer brand from 26 January to 22 February 2015. Media channels include TV, press, radio and digital. The campaign is aimed at men and women aged 50 years and over and focuses on two symptoms of oesophageal and stomach cancers – heartburn most days for three weeks or more and food sticking when you swallow. New research commissioned by PHE reveals that only one in two people would visit their doctor if they had heartburn most days for three weeks or more. Early diagnosis of oesophageal or stomach cancer is crucial and means treatment is more likely to be successful. For more information, see the Cancer Research UK [web page](#) and PHE's [press release](#).

Act FAST Stroke Campaign

The 'Act FAST' [stroke campaign](#) will re-launch on 2 February and feature on national TV to raise awareness of the main symptoms of stroke. The goal of the campaign is to reduce the amount of time between a stroke occurring and an individual's arrival at hospital which in turn should reduce the level of death and disability resulting from stroke.

Care and Support & You – Care Act public information campaign free resources now available

PHE and the Department of Health have developed [Care and Support & You](#) to raise awareness of the [Care Act reforms](#) being introduced from April 2015. The [campaign resources](#) are now available free to support partner organisations in communicating the reforms simply and effectively and include copy, creative and briefing documents.

Smokefree Homes and Cars campaign to run again in February

PHE will re-run the Smokefree Homes and Cars campaign from early February. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the dangers of second-hand smoke to children and drive motivation to quit smoking as the most effective way to keep homes and cars smokefree.

Local campaigns in February

PHE is launching a TV campaign in the East of England next week to encourage people who experience breathlessness when doing everyday activities to visit their GP as these may be signs of undiagnosed heart or lung disease. A press, radio, outdoor and digital campaign in selected areas in the East Midlands, also starting next week, will urge people not to ignore symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

Events news

Pharmacy and Public Health Forum event

The Local Government Association is hosting an event on 24 February in London on behalf of PHE's Pharmacy and Public Health Forum. The aim of the event is to raise awareness of the unique community pharmacy offer for public health, with local authority members, directors of public health and commissioners. See the [LGA website](#) for details and registration.

NHS Health Check national conference

The NHS Health Check national conference will take place on 26 February at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. The event includes workshops, presentations and Q&A sessions with senior figures. It is aimed at those involved in commissioning, providing, evaluating and supporting the NHS Health Check programme. Conference information and booking details can be found on the [conference website](#).

National Cardiovascular Health Intelligence Network masterclass programme

The network is running a series of cardiovascular masterclasses around the country to explore data, tools and information. The workshops are delivered in partnership with a number of national organisations including the National Diabetes Audit, UK Renal Registry, Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme; National Institute for Cardiovascular Outcomes Research (NICOR); PHE and NHS England Commissioning for Value. The next masterclasses are on [5 February in Taunton](#), on [19 March in Durham](#) and [22 April in London](#).