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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 figures confirm flu season has started

Latest figures from PHE show that flu is now circulating in the community with an increase in cases among children and adults. Following PHE advice, the Chief Medical Officer has this week issued guidance to all GPs in England about using antiviral drugs, for people presenting with flu-like illness who are at higher risk of developing complications. Although flu is starting to circulate, flu levels currently remain relatively low. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

High uptake of the shingles vaccine in the first year of the programme

New figures from PHE show there has been a high uptake of the new shingles vaccine during its first year of being launched. The new vaccination programme, which was launched in September 2013, was offered to adults who were aged 70 and 79 years old on 1 September of that year. Uptake data for the first year of the new programme shows that almost 62% of 70 year olds and almost 60% of 79 year olds received the shingles vaccine. The aim of the vaccination programme is to reduce the risk and severity of shingles in those most likely to be affected by the illness. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Online learning resource ahead of the expansion of newborn screening

A new online learning module has been launched to help health professionals prepare for the expansion of NHS Newborn Blood Spot Screening programme, which is part of PHE. Newborn blood spot screening aims to identify babies who

are at risk of having rare but serious conditions, such as cystic fibrosis. The module provides information on the four additional rare genetic disorders that will be part of the programme in England from early 2015. More information can be found on the expanded newborn screening and [inherited metabolic diseases](#) pages of the programme website.

Ebola news: PHE scientists receive Ebola treatment research funding

The Wellcome Trust has funded PHE scientists to explore possible Ebola treatment options. PHE scientists will use a £200K award from the trust for the first round of evaluating potential treatment options, and to determine the most viable candidates for further development. Work is already under way, with assessment of candidates started on 9 December 2014. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

PHE has also published its first Ebola monthly activity summary with information on the international picture, the number of individuals screened at ports across England and the total number of Ebola related tests carried out since the start of the outbreak.

PHE is continuing to provide updated information for professionals, including medical practitioners, humanitarian workers and travellers and for people from the affected West African countries and the general public in its Ebola virus disease: clinical management and guidance collection. Further updates from other parts of government can be found on the Ebola virus: UK government response web page.

Work exposures to HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C still rising

A new [report](#) launched earlier this month by PHE warns that healthcare workers continue to be at risk of exposure to bloodborne viruses (BBV) through occupational sharps injuries, despite the fact that safety-engineered devices to prevent these injuries are now available. Occupational exposures to a BBV that were reported to PHE increased among healthcare workers from 373 in 2004 to 496 in 2013. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

New report shows stark effect of antibiotic resistance

PHE has welcomed the publication of the first paper from the review on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Professor Neil Woodford, Head of the Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections Reference Unit at PHE is contributing scientific expertise to the group for the next two years. The

review estimates that by 2050 the global cost of AMR will be up to \$100 trillion and will account for 10 million extra deaths a year. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Cold weather alert issued

The Met Office issued the first cold weather alert of this winter earlier this month. The Level 2 cold weather alert across Yorkshire and Humber, the North East and the North West, meant there was a forecast of at least a 60% chance of severe weather, with average temperatures to drop to 2°C or below within 48 hours. For more information and advice see PHE's [press release](#).

PHE publishes new co-existing substance misuse and mental health issues profiling tool

PHE's national mental health, dementia and neurology intelligence network has produced a new [co-existing substance misuse and mental health issues profiling tool](#). This brings together a range of key publically available data on prevalence, risk, access, treatment and outcomes for people with co-existing substance misuse and mental health issues. Commissioners, service providers, clinicians, service users and their families can benchmark their area against similar populations and gain intelligence about what works in meeting the needs of people experiencing these issues.

Report reveals 36 women died from flu in three years

A new [report](#) published this month shows how fatal the flu virus can be for pregnant women. The national maternal deaths report, led by a team of academics, clinicians and charity representatives called MBRRACE-UK, shows that amongst those women who died in, or shortly after, pregnancy, between 2009 and 2012, flu was the cause of death in 1 in 11. Within this period, which includes the period of the influenza pandemic in 2009 to 2010, a total of 36 pregnant women died with strains of the flu virus that the current vaccine will protect against. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Data and evidence about infant mortality and stillbirths

PHE's national child and maternal health intelligence network has released new infant mortality and stillbirth [information and publications](#). It includes a slide pack and briefing document on the key evidence and data on infant mortality and stillbirths at a national level. A service snapshot for infant mortality and stillbirths,

and infant mortality and stillbirth profiles have also been updated to give local data for upper tier local authorities and for clinical commissioning groups.

Keeping illness at bay on cruises

PHE and the National Travel Health Network and Centre have published a [factsheet](#) advising UK travellers how to stay healthy and safe when on a cruise this winter. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Proposals invited for NHS Health Check content review

As part of the NHS Health Check content review process the programme's expert scientific and clinical advisory panel (ESCAP) are inviting proposals from organisations on removing, amending or introducing new elements to the programme. The [content review process](#) will support ESCAP in making evidence-based recommendations to the Department of Health and ministers on possible changes to the programme. Proposals will be accepted until 31 March 2015.

New project to create healthy weight environments

The Town and Country Planning Associations (TCPA) have launched a project, jointly sponsored by PHE, on how planners, public health, developers and other community stakeholders can work together to create places that encourage people to live lifestyles that help maintain a healthy weight. The [Planning healthy weight environments](#) project has worked closely with seven local authorities. The TCPA has also published a special journal issue, guest edited by PHE, on [reuniting health with planning](#).

Report highlights discrimination for BME gay and bisexual men

A PHE report on [the health and wellbeing of black and minority ethnic gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men](#) (BME MSM) highlights the discrimination experienced by BME MSM due to sexual orientation, ethnicity and faith, and the barriers they face in accessing services due to racism or homophobia. A project mentioned in the report focuses on sexual health, mental health and wellbeing, drugs, alcohol and tobacco use.

Dental survey of older people in the North West

PHE has published a [North West dental survey of older people 2013](#). The survey was undertaken with managers of services for older people to investigate what

services were being provided to maintain oral health among their clients. The data should help local authorities to monitor and target resource to protect and improve dental health.

NAO report on PHE's grants to local authorities

The National Audit Office has published a report on PHE's grant to local authorities in year from 2013 to 2014. It says that PHE has made a good start in supporting local authorities with their new responsibilities for public health. For further details, see the full report and an executive summary on the [NAO website](#).

Recent PHE blogs

[The health and wellbeing of BME MSM: minorities within minorities](#)

by Justin Varney (19 December 2014)

[Preventing suicide – there's a role for all of us](#)

by Kevin Fenton (18 December 2014)

[#DataBlog: Good news on smoking](#)

by Julian Flowers and Clare Griffiths (11 December 2014)

[Maximising the nursing and midwifery contribution to prevention](#)

by Viv Bennett and Joanne Bosanquet (10 December 2014)

[Why do we see gender differences in bowel cancer screening?](#)

by Julietta Patnick (5 December 2014)

[How does UK diabetes care compare to other European countries?](#)

by Naomi Holman (4 December 2014)

[Leaving it late: why are people still dying from HIV in the UK?](#)

by Jane Anderson (1 December 2014)

Campaigns news

PHE's Change4Life is helping families make simple swaps to reduce their sugar intake

PHE's [Change4Life](#) 'Sugar Swaps' campaign will launch on 5 January 2015. The sugar reduction campaign aims to help families cut down on their sugar intake by making simple swaps to what they eat and drink at key occasions throughout the day.

New Smokefree: Health Harms campaign

PHE will launch a national Smokefree Health Harms campaign on 29 December, which includes new creative material, to highlight how smoking damages the body and causes a slow and steady decline in a process akin to rotting.

East of England 'Breathlessness' symptom awareness campaign: February-March 2015

A campaign to raise awareness of breathlessness as a symptom of conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and heart failure will run from February-March 2015 in the East of England. The campaign will encourage people who get out of breath doing everyday activities to go to their GP. For more information see the [tripartite letter](#) from PHE, the Department of Health and NHS England.

PHE encourages people to sign up to Dry January

PHE is supporting [Dry January](#), a campaign by Alcohol Concern aimed at the social drinker and encouraging them to give up alcohol for a month. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

News from other organisations

Proposed allocation of funding for children's 0-5 public health services

The Department of Health has published proposed funding allocations for local authorities for the commissioning of children's 0-5 public health services from 1 October 2015 to 31 March 2016. The [document](#) also explains the process for how local authorities can respond before the Department finalises the allocations.

Health survey for England for 2013 and national child measurement programme data for 2013/14 published

The Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) has published the [Health Survey for England 2013](#). The data covers a number of areas including tobacco control and use of e-cigarettes. HSCIC has also published the latest [national child measurement programme data for 2013/14](#), showing the prevalence of underweight, healthy weight, overweight and obesity for children in state schools in reception and year 6 according to their BMI. The full report and data tables by upper and lower tier local authority are available on the [HSCIC website](#).

The end of open tobacco displays

Rules that prevent supermarkets from displaying tobacco will be extended to all businesses in April 2015. Newsagents, pubs, clubs and shops will stop displaying tobacco products from April 2015 as part of the government's strategy to reduce the number of smokers. For more information see the Department of Health news story.

Data sharing guidance for healthcare workers

A [guidance leaflet](#) to help health and care professionals make the right decisions about data sharing has been published by the Department of Health and the [Information Governance Alliance](#).

Events news

PHE Board's next open meeting

The tenth open meeting of PHE's Board will take place at 10:30 am on 28 January 2014 at Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH. It will include a discussion on public health and rural populations. Meeting [details](#) including board papers for earlier meetings are available online.

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](#).