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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](http://www.gov.uk/phe)

## Public health news

### Tackling high blood pressure

PHE and a number of partners across local and national government, the health service, voluntary sector and academia have come together with the ambition of improving the prevention, early detection and management of high blood pressure in England. The new group has published an action plan, [Tackling High Blood Pressure: From Evidence into Action](#), setting out the steps towards emulating the success of other countries, such as the US and Canada. High blood pressure affects more than one in four adults and is one of the biggest risk factors for premature death and disability in England. Diseases caused by high blood pressure are estimated to cost the NHS over £2 billion every year. For further information see PHE's [press release](#).

### Almost 500 men have potentially lifesaving surgery through screening

PHE's NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme is preventing hundreds of premature deaths among men aged 65 and over. The first set of [annual data](#) for all local NHS screening providers shows that more than 260,000 men were screened in England during 2013/14 with nearly 3,700 aneurysms detected. Of these, 487 men received potentially lifesaving surgery during 2013 to 2014 while the others can be closely monitored to ensure they receive treatment if their aneurysms grow. If left untreated, the aneurysm can rupture, and 8 out of every 10 people with a ruptured AAA die before they reach hospital, or do not survive the emergency surgery. For more information see PHE's [press release](#). Public information

for the [NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme](#) and [NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme](#) is now available on the NHS Choices website.

### **PHE atlas highlights variation in treatment of diabetes and high blood pressure across the country**

[Healthier Lives: Diabetes, Hypertension and NHS Health Check](#), a major new online tool from PHE, reveals large variation in the prevalence and treatment of diabetes and high blood pressure and in the provision of the NHS Health Check across the country. The interactive '[heat map](#)' includes information on prevalence of the conditions and their complications, levels of care provided and the quality of care achieved in each area by local authority, clinical commissioning group and general practice, compared to the England average. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **More problem drinkers getting help and recovering**

[Alcohol Treatment in England 2013 to 2014](#), a new report published by PHE, shows that the alcohol treatment system is working well with a 5% increase in the number of people in treatment and 6% more overcoming their dependency than last year. Waiting times also continue to fall with 93% waiting less than three weeks to start treatment. Around nine million adults drink at levels that pose some risk to their health. Of these, 1.6 million adults show some signs of dependence. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Freshers told 'it's not too late' for MenC vaccine**

Immunisation experts and university leaders are urging first year university students (freshers) to come forward for a vaccine to protect them against meningococcal C infection following recent reports of cases of meningococcal disease among the student population. Provisional figures show that 21 cases of meningococcal disease have been reported in university students since the start of the academic year in September 2014. NHS England has confirmed that the MenC booster programme offered to students from August this year will be extended until March 2015. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

## **Ebola update**

PHE is continuing to focus on the international response to the Ebola virus and to ensure the UK is prepared and protected. Jointly with the Department of Health and NHS England, PHE has published [Ebola: top facts and mythbuster](#) documents. PHE is also publishing updated information for professionals in its [Ebola virus disease: clinical management and guidance](#) collection. Further new and updated information from PHE and other parts of government can be found at the [Ebola virus: UK government response](#) web page.

## **More than 340,000 healthcare workers take up flu vaccine**

[Figures](#) published by PHE show that more than 340,000 frontline healthcare workers in England had a flu vaccination in September and October this year. The figures reveal that almost 37% of the frontline healthcare workforce has been vaccinated against flu already this winter, compared to 35% of workers who were vaccinated in the same period in 2013 to 2014. For more information see PHE's [press release](#). See also advice to parents from the [Chief Medical Officer](#) to get their toddlers vaccinated against flu now to prevent them from severe illness.

## **Men need humour and camaraderie to lose weight**

A new [How to guide](#) launched (13 November 2014) this month by the Men's Health Forum charity, and supported by PHE, provides guidance on how to adapt and run weight-loss programmes that are tailored specifically for men. Although 67% of men are overweight or obese, compared to 58% of women, men are much less likely to join weight-loss programmes. The evidence-based guide, [How to make weight-loss services work for men](#), aimed at local authorities, commissioners and weight management providers, follows important new research on male attitudes and behaviour in relation to health. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

## **Scarlet fever, the beginning of a new season**

Early indications from PHE for the current 2014 to 2015 scarlet fever season are that infection levels are low, but they are higher than normal for this time of year. Around 100 cases of scarlet fever are being reported each week across England. Levels of scarlet fever, an infectious disease caused by bacteria, are typically low during the autumn and early winter but are

expected to gradually increase over the coming months. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

### **HIV infections continue to rise**

The new report [HIV in the UK](#), published by PHE last week, shows that there are now nearly 110,000 people living with HIV in the UK. Around a quarter of these are unaware of their infection and at risk of passing on the virus to others through unprotected sex. Encouragingly, the proportion of people diagnosed with a late stage of HIV infection fell from 57% in 2004 to 42% in 2013. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Innovative hospital alcohol teams show excellent return on investment and benefits for hospitals and public health**

A new PHE report, [Alcohol Care in England's Hospitals: An Opportunity Not To Be Wasted](#), shows the clear benefits that specialist alcohol teams have for both hospitals and public health – with evaluations indicating a return on investment of between £3.50 and £3.85 per £1 invested. The report is a summary of the available evidence for the contribution of specialist alcohol services for patients in secondary care.

### **Troubled families – supporting health needs**

PHE in partnership with NHS England, the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government has published a [set of documents](#) to help health teams to support the health needs of troubled families and work with local councils. Research shows that 71% of families in the [Troubled Families programme](#) suffer from poor health.

### **New funding available for drug and alcohol recovery**

PHE has announced the availability of £10 million of capital funding for services that are helping people in England with drug or alcohol problems to recover from their addiction. Local authorities and service providers are able to apply for capital funding to support recovery-focused projects, following a similar process earlier this year. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Evidence into practice: tackling domestic violence in universities and the workplace**

PHE has commissioned the University of the West of England to develop a programme to encourage all students to stand up against violence or sexual abuse in their community. The programme includes an [educational toolkit](#) for use by universities and colleges to help prevent sexual coercion and domestic abuse in university settings. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

PHE has also launched a new [violence toolkit for businesses](#) to guide businesses on how they can tackle domestic violence and raise awareness of an issue that impacts health, wellbeing, absence and turnover in the workplace. The toolkit was commissioned by PHE and developed by [The Corporate Alliance](#) and the [Latimer Group](#). It provides practical tools and resources to help businesses take action against domestic violence over the 16 Days of Action campaign, from 25 November to 10 December 2014. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Avian influenza (bird flu) outbreak in Yorkshire: risk to public health extremely low**

PHE is assisting the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) in the investigation of an avian flu outbreak at a duck breeding farm in Yorkshire. Testing has now confirmed that the strain of avian flu concerned is H5N8, which supports our assessment that the public health risk is extremely low. To date, no human infections of H5N8 have ever been reported worldwide and the risk of transmission from birds to humans is considered to be extremely low. The Food Standards Agency has advised that avian flu does not pose a food safety risk in the UK. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

### **Reducing the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning over winter**

PHE is advising people to have their fossil fuel and wood burning appliances, such as boilers, heaters and cookers, checked by an appropriately registered engineer before winter sets in. There are around 40 accidental deaths a year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in England and Wales and it is estimated that around 4,000 people attend accident and emergency departments in England each year because of CO poisoning. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **What Works Centre for Wellbeing announced**

PHE is playing a major role in the development and establishment of a What Works Centre for Wellbeing. This independent national centre is the latest addition to the 'What Works Network', which was launched by the government last year to improve public services through evidence-based policy and practice. The new centre expects soon to be commissioning universities to research the impact that different interventions and services have on wellbeing. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

### **Obesity and fitness briefing paper**

PHE has published [Obesity and fitness: the relationship between obesity, cardiorespiratory fitness and mortality](#), a briefing paper that presents recent evidence behind the relationship between obesity, cardiovascular fitness and mortality, and briefly explores the main public health implications.

### **Soldier saves lives, years after death**

A bacteria grown from a soldier who died of dysentery in World War 1 has had its genetic code unlocked using genome sequencing. This has revealed the bacteria was already resistant to penicillin around 25 years before the drug was commonly used to treat infectious diseases. A scientific paper describing this finding 'The extant World War 1 dysentery bacillus NCTC1: a genomic analysis' is published in *The Lancet* as a commemoration of World War 1. This work was a collaboration between PHE and the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Commissioning for value support packs for clinical commissioning groups**

Working with PHE and NHS Right Care, NHS England has published a suite of materials to support effective commissioning for value. This includes a range of comprehensive data packs and online tools. The first packs were released in October 2013 and showed clinical commissioning groups and area teams where to look first to identify opportunities to improve outcomes and increase value for local populations. New 'pathways on a page' packs published this month provide in-depth data for the 13 patient conditions that were most commonly identified as offering the greatest potential improvements. For more information, see PHE's [news story](#).

### **Antivirals in the fight against flu this winter**

PHE has published updated guidance for healthcare professionals on the use of antivirals for the treatment and prevention of flu, confirming the drugs can reduce the risk of death in patients hospitalised with the virus. Older people, the very young, pregnant women and those with a health condition are at particular risk from the more serious effects of flu. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Half of people with hepatitis C unaware**

PHE has published its [Shooting up: infections among people who inject drugs in the UK 2013](#) report. In total, 13,750 hepatitis C infections were diagnosed in 2013 in the UK, with around 90% acquired through injecting drug use. Around two in five people who inject psychoactive drugs such as heroin, crack and amphetamines are now living with hepatitis C, but half of these infections remain undiagnosed. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Polio vaccine recommendations updated for travellers from the UK**

PHE and the National Travel Health Network and Centre have issued further advice for travellers from England, Wales and Northern Ireland who are visiting countries either currently exporting wild polio virus or countries known to be infected, but not exporting wild polio virus. The recommendations take into account the recent World Health Organization [guidance](#) for polio free countries. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

### **Drug recovery rates update**

A new report, [Drug treatment in England 2013-14](#), reveals that drug treatment is working well for many but there is a continuing need for increasingly tailored approaches to support a range of complex needs among some drug users. For more information see the [annual drug treatment statistics in England for 2013-14](#) from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System.

### **Entrenched misconceptions about antibiotics revealed in new survey**

Four in ten people take antibiotics for a cough or runny nose despite both conditions normally clearing up without treatment, according to new research by PHE for [European Antibiotic Awareness Day](#). The research also found

90% of people are not aware bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics spreads easily from person to person, and more than 1 in 7 do not realise that healthy people can harbour these bacteria. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

### **Consultation begins on research priorities for the NHS Health Check programme**

PHE is seeking views on the proposed NHS Health Check research priorities. NHS Health Check is for 40-74 year olds and aims to reduce the risk of people developing preventable conditions. This [consultation](#) is an important step in establishing the key evidence required to ensure an effective programme. The consultation closes on 19 December 2014.

### **Update for data and statistics about children and young people**

PHE's National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network has redesigned and updated its [data directory](#) for children, young people and maternity. The directory describes each resource including who publishes it, what age groups and geographical areas it covers and how to access it.



## Recent PHE blogs

[Private health screening – paying for peace of mind?](#) by Anne Mackie (27 November 2014).

[Expert interview: How do you catch Ebola?](#) by Brian McCloskey (26 November 2014).

[Domestic violence: What action are you taking?](#) By Justin Varney (25 November 2014).

[The best start for all our children](#) by Viv Bennett (20 November 2014).

[10 reasons YOU should be worried about antibiotic resistance](#) by Diane Ashiru-Oredope (18 November 2014).

[Smoking and inequalities – let's put a stop to it!](#) By Kevin Fenton (17 November 2014).

[Improving the health of vulnerable families](#) by Ann Hoskins (14 November 2014).

[#Datablog: Our data at your fingertips](#) by Julian Flowers (13 November 2014).

[Wellbeing: How do we know what works?](#) By Kevin Fenton (12 November 2014).

[Allied health professionals – a missed opportunity for commissioners?](#) by Linda Hindle (6 November 2014).

[A focus on Flu](#) by Paul Cosford (5 November 2014).

[Healthier Lives: Making it easier to prevent and manage diabetes](#) by Kevin Fenton (30 October 2014).

## Campaigns news

### Smokefree Health Harms campaign

The third Smokefree Health Harms campaign will launch nationally on 29 December 2014. The campaign will feature re-runs of the Mutations and Toxic Cycle TV ads as well as a new commercial that dramatises the damage caused by smoking to every part of the body. Free Smokefree promotional resources can be ordered by contacting [partnerships@phe.gov.uk](mailto:partnerships@phe.gov.uk).

### PHE's on demand social response pilot goes live

Based on an audit of online discussions in the UK, PHE found that people were seeking healthy lifestyle advice over six million times each year and in the majority of cases, not receiving adequate responses. PHE has therefore launched a small-scale trial via Money Saving Expert and Twitter, to answer people's questions by providing relevant, healthy lifestyle information and tools.

### Change4Life January 2015 campaign

PHE will launch a major Change4Life sugar reduction campaign in January 2015 in the context of promoting a balanced diet. The campaign will use advertising, partnership marketing, digital engagement, community events, schools programmes, public relations and behaviour change techniques to inspire further reduction in sugar consumption. For more information or to order resources please contact [partnerships@phe.gov.uk](mailto:partnerships@phe.gov.uk).

### No Smoking Day

No Smoking Day is back on 11 March 2015 for its 32<sup>nd</sup> year. This year's theme presents quitting as something to be proud of, and quitters as people to be admired. PHE is a partner of this British Heart Foundation campaign. Campaign packs and resources can be ordered at [nosmokingday.org.uk](http://nosmokingday.org.uk).

## News from other organisations

### NHS England publishes independent report on care of people with learning disabilities

NHS England has published an independent report on the future care of people with learning disabilities and/or autism, to build on work that is already underway, to support more people in moving from in-patient to community settings. The report is by the Transforming Care and Commissioning Steering Group chaired by Sir Stephen Bubb, chief executive of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, and is available on [NHS England's website](#).

### Getting it right for families

The Early Intervention Foundation, one of the Government 'What Works' centres, has published a report, [Getting it right for families](#), which provides practical advice for local areas and examples of how services can be 'joined up' or integrated across the early years. This follows work with 20 pioneering local places to explore promising practice in bringing together health agencies with early education services such as Children's Centres, nurseries and childcare.

## 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.