



News Release

TB rates in North East half national average

The number of cases of tuberculosis (TB) diagnosed in the North East increased in 2012, according to Public Health England's annual 'TB in the UK: 2013 report', published today (Wednesday 21 August).

A total of 166 cases were diagnosed in 2012 compared to 131 in 2011 following a steady decline over the previous four years – but the rate is still less than half the national average.

Rates of TB have stabilised nationally at around 14 cases per 100,000 since the mid-2000s. The rate in the North East is 6.4 per 100,000.

Nationally, as in previous years, almost three quarters of cases were in people born in countries where TB is more common. Of those born abroad, the majority of cases were from South Asia (60 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (22 per cent).

In the UK-born population, those most at risk are people from ethnic minority groups, those with social risk factors such as a history of homelessness, imprisonment or problem use of drugs or alcohol and the elderly.

Paul Davison, director of health protection at the North East PHE Centre, said: 'TB is a preventable and treatable condition, but, if left untreated, can be life-threatening.

'Although we have seen an increase in the number of cases diagnosed in the North East, we think that a proportion of this may be due to improved reporting systems, and we still have some of the lowest levels of the disease in the country.

'Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment are key so we encourage local health service commissioners to prioritise the delivery of appropriate clinical and public health services for TB.'

Dr Paul Cosford, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director at PHE, said: "TB remains an important public health problem, particularly in London and among people from vulnerable communities. We have therefore made TB one of the key priorities for PHE and are working with key stakeholders to oversee the development of a stronger national approach to TB control.

“This will have at its heart support to local clinical, preventive and social care services in the NHS, local government and wider health and social care system. We are determined to see a sustained reduction in TB, and will work tirelessly to support local partners in those areas where the burden is greatest.”

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Notes to editors:

- 1 PHE Tuberculosis in the UK Report (2013) – an embargoed copy of the report is available on request from the press office or at the following link from Wednesday 21 August: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/InfectiousDiseases/Tuberculosis/>
- 2 TB is an infection caused by bacteria. It usually affects the lungs, but can affect other parts of the body. TB is transmitted when someone who has the infection coughs or sneezes, but it requires close prolonged contact in order to spread from person to person. For more information about tuberculosis, please visit: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Tuberculosis/>
- 3 Public Health England’s mission is to protect and improve the nation’s health and to address inequalities through working with national and local government, the NHS, industry and the voluntary and community sector. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

Issued by: Karen Lloyd, Public Health England, North East Press Office

Tel: 0844 225 3550 or Karen.lloyd@phe.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone 0844 225 3550

www.gov.uk/phe

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