



News Release

TB in Cumbria & Lancashire a public health priority

New figures show 216 tuberculosis (TB) cases were reported in Cumbria & Lancashire in 2012, compared to 214 cases reported in 2011. The figures are published in Public Health England's annual "TB in the UK: 2013 report" published today (Tuesday).

Rates of TB have stabilised nationally at around 14 cases per 100,000 since the mid-2000s, following the increase in incidence seen in the previous two decades. However, despite considerable efforts to improve prevention, treatment and control, TB incidence in the UK remains high compared to most other Western European countries.

The number of TB cases in Lancashire has fallen slightly from 203 in 2011 to 183 in 2012. TB rates are highest in Blackburn, followed by Preston followed by Blackpool.

The number of TB cases in Cumbria in 2012 increased from 11 in 2011 to 27 in 2012. Part of this increase is explained by a change in the way data was collected however there was an increase in cases. The increase was due to expected year-to-year variation.

London continued to carry the burden of infection in 2012, with 3,426 cases accounting for almost 40 per cent of the UK total, followed by the West Midlands with 12 per cent. 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).

Dr Ken Lamden, TB lead from the Cumbria & Lancashire PHE Centre said: TB is an important public health priority but this is not always recognised as TB tends to be thought of as a disease of the past. TB is a preventable and treatable condition, but, if left untreated, can be life threatening. It's positive we've seen a slight decrease in the number of TB cases, but efforts to control the spread of this infection must remain a public health priority. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment are key to reducing TB levels in the UK so we encourage local health service commissioners to prioritise the delivery of appropriate clinical and public health services for TB, especially in areas where TB rates are highest."

"To reduce the risk of active TB disease in people coming to the UK from high incidence countries, it is essential that new migrants have good access to screening and diagnostic services. Ensuring that NICE recommendations on screening for latent TB infection are implemented in a coordinated manner across the country is therefore very important. In Cumbria and Lancashire TB is a public health priority and we need to build up our services for tuberculosis so that we aim to reduce the number of TB cases as recommended in the national NICE guidance.

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:

Total number of cases of TB

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|
| Cumbria | 7 | 9 | 11 | 27 |
| Lancashire | 173 | 182 | 203 | 183 |

1. PHE Tuberculosis in the UK Report (2013) – an embargoed copy of the report is available from the press office or at the following link from <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/InfectiousDiseases/Tuberculosis/1308TBintheUK2013report/>
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.

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