



News Release

TB rates in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset lower than national average

New figures show 85 cases of tuberculosis (TB) cases were reported in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset in 2012 with a rate of 3.9, compared to 92 cases reported in 2011 with a rate of 4.2 in 2011. The figures are published in Public Health England's annual "TB in the UK: 2013 report" published today (Wednesday). This shows a decrease from 2011- 2012.

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.

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).

In the UK-born population, those most at risk remain individuals 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.

Professor Debra Laphorne, Centre Director for Devon, Cornwall and Somerset said: "TB is a preventable and treatable condition, but, if left untreated, can be life threatening.

"Although numbers in the area have decreased slightly 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."

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.”

-ends-

Notes to editors:

1. PHE Tuberculosis in the UK Report (2013) – an embargoed copy of the report is available at the following link:
<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.

www.gov.uk/phe Follow us on Twitter @PHE_uk
South Public Health England Infections Press Office
2 Rivergate, Bristol
Tel: 0117 9689161
www.gov.uk/phe