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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

Health Matters – tackling antimicrobial resistance

Tackling antimicrobial resistance through responsible prescribing is the subject of the second edition of PHE's [Health Matters resource](#) for health professionals, designed to support commissioning and the delivery of services across local areas. The new edition brings together local and national level data, as well as [infographics](#), [video](#) and presentation slides presented in an easy-to-use, engaging format that will help make the case for antimicrobial stewardship. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Scientists use DNA technology to diagnose cases of TB faster

Whole genome sequencing is a faster, cheaper and more effective way of diagnosing tuberculosis (TB) says a [new study](#) published in the journal *Lancet Respiratory Medicine*. Dr Louise Pankhurst of the University of Oxford and a team of worldwide collaborators including PHE used innovative DNA technology to diagnose cases of TB up to eight times faster than traditional methods. This is the first time the technology was applied in real world scenarios. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

London deal paves way to transform healthcare across the capital

PHE chief executive Duncan Selbie joined the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, London Mayor Boris Johnson, Simon Stevens, and Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt together with local health and civic leaders last week to sign a [health devolution agreement](#) for London. This blueprint sets the stage for the radical transformation of health and social care services across the capital and lays out a clear vision for how partners across the system will work together to improve the health of Londoners. It also identifies five pilot areas that will operate locally and sub-regionally. PHE London has been at the forefront of developing the deal. For more information see Duncan Selbie's [Friday message](#) and the government [news story](#).

Meningococcal disease cases peak in winter: PHE urges vaccination

PHE is calling for students to get the MenACWY vaccine as cases of meningococcal disease – that can lead to meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning) – are anticipated to spike in the winter months. All teenagers aged 18 and 19 are eligible to receive the vaccine for free regardless of whether they are studying or pursuing other activities. PHE figures show that cases of meningococcal disease peak each year during winter. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Adult heroin user recovery remains a challenge in England

Fewer under-18s are accessing specialist substance misuse services and adults starting treatment are increasingly aged 40 or over. In both older and younger people who are receiving help there are signs of increasing vulnerabilities that require wide-ranging support. [New figures](#) released by PHE show waiting times for both adult and young people's treatment remain low. Over 97% of adults start treatment within three weeks, and 98% of young people receive help within this time. This latest data provides further evidence that there is an ageing population of heroin users in drug treatment who have wide-ranging health and social problems that they need help with, alongside their treatment. This may be contributing to the slow-down in rates of recovery. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

More healthcare professionals urged to take up flu vaccine

PHE has published its second flu vaccine uptake figures in healthcare workers for the 2015/16 season. The new figures show 44.1% of frontline healthcare workers had received their influenza vaccination as of 30 November 2015 compared to 48.2% of workers who were vaccinated in the same period in 2014 to 2015. This means that over 422,000 frontline healthcare workers out of the 957,096 frontline healthcare workers in England have now received their flu vaccination. Healthcare professionals are being urged to take up the flu vaccine before flu starts to circulate more widely this year. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

Screening reports launched at stakeholder conference

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NCS) launched two annual reports at its first ever stakeholder conference earlier this month. [NHS Screening Programmes in England 2014 to 2015](#) includes high level national screening data for each of the three cancer and eight non-cancer screening programmes, which were brought together for the first time in 2014 to 2015 into PHE's screening division. [Screening in the UK: making effective recommendations 2014 to 2015](#) summarises the committee's work during a year when it made recommendations on 17 topics. For more information see PHE's [press release](#).

Scarlet fever: beginning of a new season

Following the significant increase in scarlet fever cases over the last two years, early indications for 2015 to 2016 suggest England may be entering a third season of high numbers of infections. So far this season 2,155 scarlet fever reports have been made across England since the second week of September 2015. Levels of scarlet fever are typically low during the autumn and early winter, increasing over the next few months and reaching highest levels in March and April. For more information see PHE's [news story](#).

What about YOUTH Fingertips tool launched

The Health and Social Care Information Centre has produced the [What About YOUTH? 2014 survey](#), a study of self-reported attitudes to healthy lifestyles and risky behaviours in 15 year olds in England. PHE is publishing the data through the Fingertips platform. The [Health behaviours in young people – What About YOUTH? tool](#) provides local authority level estimates for several topic areas with the information for each shown by ethnicity, deprivation, sexuality, region and local authority.

Chief Medical Officer calls for action on women's health

In her latest annual report, [The Health of the 51%: Women](#), Chief Medical Officer Professor Dame Sally Davies makes recommendations on a wide range of health issues, most notably obesity, ovarian cancer and 'taboo problems' such as incontinence and the menopause. The report highlights obesity as one of the biggest risks to women's health, affecting all aspects of a woman's life. Dame Sally says that the growing obesity problem is so serious that the government needs to make tackling obesity in the whole population a national priority. For more information see the Department of Health [news story](#).

PHE yearly report on surveillance of surgical site infections

PHE has published [Surveillance of Surgical Site Infections in NHS Hospitals in England, 2014/15](#), a yearly report on surgical site infections collected by NHS hospitals and independent sector NHS treatment centres in England.

Perinatal and infant mental health needs assessment tool published

PHE has launched a [new interactive tool](#) to help local commissioners and providers to plan their approach to perinatal and infant mental health in their area. The new needs assessment tool provides evidence-based information on risk factors affecting perinatal and infant health.

BRE briefing paper on homes and ageing in England

A new briefing paper, commissioned by PHE and developed by BRE, formerly the Building Research Establishment, is available [online](#). The briefing provides an overview of the housing conditions of older people, and estimates the cost of poor housing occupied by the older population to the NHS. It provides evidence that can be used by local government and health services in respect of older people.

Recent PHE blogs

[Making every contact count for winter](#)

by Angie Bone (28 November)

[World AIDS Day 2015: Supporting local HIV prevention projects](#)

by Kevin Fenton (1 December)

[National Science Hub vision becomes a reality](#)

by Richard Gleave (2 December)

[Loneliness and isolation: Social relationships are key to good health](#)

by Kevin Fenton (8 December)

[Maintaining the momentum- AHP contribution to public health](#)

by Linda Hindle, (8 December)

[Perinatal mental health- how can our new interactive tool help](#)

by Kevin Fenton and John Newton (9 December)

[Health Matters- tackling antimicrobial resistance](#)

by Kevin Fenton and John Newton (10 December)

[Health Matters- Your Antimicrobial resistance toolkit](#)

by Diane Ashiru-Oredope (10 December)

[Health Matters- Keeping watch over our antibiotics](#)

by Susan Hopkins (10 December)

[Joining up action on sustainability: local to national and across local government](#)

by Stephen Morton (11 December)

[The Public Health England Takeover Day Challenge](#)

by Lily Makurah (14 December)

[Carbon monoxide- the silent killer](#)

by Sani Dimitroulopoulou (15 December)

Campaigns news

Dry January campaign launched as weary Brits admit they need a break

Alcohol Concern's [Dry January](#) campaign, which PHE is supporting, promotes the benefits of a month of abstinence for people to give their body a rest. Launched earlier this month, it targets all adult drinkers who consume above the guidelines on a regular basis, with a particular focus on increasing and higher-risk drinkers aged 40 to 60 from lower socioeconomic groups who are likely to suffer the most from alcohol harms. In a further spike of activity, a PHE [press release](#) last week said the last Friday before Christmas was the biggest drinking day of the year. New figures from PHE and Alcohol Concern show that two in five of us, who drink more than usual during the festive season, feel they need a break from alcohol.

Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign in January

PHE launches the new Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign, which supports PHE's sugar reduction strategy, on 4 January. The campaign will run to mid-February and includes TV, outdoor and digital advertising, social marketing, PR and roadshows. It will raise awareness of the new guidance, reveal the surprising amount of sugar in popular everyday food and drinks and promote PHE's new Sugar Smart [app](#).

Smokefree health harms campaign returns

PHE's Smokefree campaign is back in January and aims to capitalise on New Year resolutions to encourage people to quit smoking. It will include digital and TV advertising that illustrates the harm caused by smoking. To go Smokefree in 2016, visit nhs.uk/smokefree.

News from other organisations

Ovarian cancer screening trial results published

One of the largest ever randomised trials has concluded that ovarian cancer screening may reduce ovarian cancer mortality by an estimated 20% after follow-up of up to 14 years. The United Kingdom Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening, an international screening trial led by University College London and published in the *Lancet* on 17 December 2015, was funded by the UK Medical

Research Council, the Department of Health, and charities Cancer Research UK and the Eve Appeal. The trial, which involved over 202,000 post-menopausal women aged 50 or over, also concluded that longer follow-up is needed to determine the ultimate mortality reduction and if screening the general population is cost effective. For more information, see the UCL [news article](#).

Health Committee report calls for action on childhood obesity

The House of Commons Health Select Committee has published a report, [Childhood obesity – brave and bold action](#), saying that the scale and consequences of childhood obesity demand bold and urgent action from government.

NICE guidelines on oral health promotion and supporting older people

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published [new guidelines to improve people's oral health](#) by focusing on visits to the dentist. The new guidance sets out the best ways for high street dentists to support patients to maintain good oral health. It has also published [a new guideline to support older people's mental wellbeing and independence](#). The guideline recommends a number of initiatives to help older people become more involved with other people and their communities, in activities that will not only benefit the individual, but wider society as a whole.

Report gives recommendations for enabling people to stay out of hospital at the end of life

The National Council for Palliative Care has published [Getting Serious about Prevention](#), which provides key recommendations on enabling people to stay out of hospital at the end of life when they neither need nor want to be there. It gives examples of good practice and case studies from people with personal experience of care.

Dame Una O'Brien to leave Department of Health

After five years as Permanent Secretary and a Civil Service career stretching back 25 years, Dame Una O'Brien, the Department of Health's Permanent Secretary, has announced her intention to leave the Department at the end of April 2016. Dame Una is the first woman to be Permanent Secretary for the Department and took up her role in November 2010. For more information see the Department of Health's [news story](#).

Events

PHE Board's next open meeting

The next open meeting of the [PHE Board](#) is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 27 January 2016. Meeting [details](#) will be available online.

Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Public Health annual public health conference

The Local Government Association (LGA) and Association of Directors of Public Health will hold their annual [conference](#) on public health in London on 3 February 2016. It will highlight the innovative work already being undertaken by councils and public health teams with their partners and communities and look at how to build on best practice. Full details are available on the [LGA website](#).

The NHS Health Check conference registration open

Registration is now open for the [NHS Health Check Conference 2016](#) on 1 March 2016 at the Kia Oval in London. Speakers include PHE chief executive Duncan Selbie and NHS England medical director Sir Bruce Keogh. There will be a series of workshops exploring different aspects of the programme. The conference is aimed at professionals involved with commissioning, providing, evaluating and supporting the NHS Health Check programme.