



# Update from Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

We improve Residents' lives

We work with Integrity

We act Sustainably

We champion Equality & Fairness



September 2025

## Welcome

**Welcome to the September edition of my monthly newsletter, which aims to keep professionals who have an interest in Hertfordshire Public Health up to date with what's going on locally.**

I recently had the pleasure of joining our Deputy Executive Member for Public Health and Community Safety, Dr Allison Wren, at a

summer picnic at one of our local Family Centres to support the launch of our Breastfeeding Friendly scheme. It was an enjoyable event, attended by local mums and the many professionals who help them navigate their way through the early years of family life. You can read more below. Our Hertfordshire Family Centres work very closely with us in Public Health to support families with advice and

interventions that promote healthy childhood development, including promoting the benefits of immunisations to keep children healthy (see spotlight in the next section).

### September spotlight: Vaccines

Vaccines save lives, yet uptake has dropped in recent years which means we are seeing a rise in vaccine-preventable infections in Hertfordshire. We're working closely with voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations, as well as statutory partners, to actively promote vaccines, address barriers to uptake and make every contact count.

A decline in **MMR and other childhood vaccines** is leaving children unprotected and increasing the risk of outbreaks. The summer walk-in vaccination clinics provided a great opportunity for parents to get their child's pre-school vaccines and boosters

done ahead of the new term. Now, as children and young people return to education, we'll be working with early years settings, schools, colleges and universities to provide information and encourage anyone who is not yet up-to-date with childhood immunisations to see their GP or local health team.

We're also attending the University of Hertfordshire freshers fair on Friday 26 September, along with Hertfordshire Community Trust, to provide a pop-up vaccination clinic and remind students to get up-to-date with their **MMR, MenACWY and HPV vaccines**.

**Flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines** help to protect those who are most at risk of serious illness in winter. Our winter health postcard encourages those eligible to take up the offer of these free vaccines and provides useful advice on staying safe and well as the temperatures drop. [Please contact us](#) if you would like to request copies.

Finally, it's also worth noting a **couple of changes** to the vaccine schedule. For the first time, all severely immunosuppressed people *aged 18 years and over* can receive the **shingles vaccine**. From January GP practices will also offer eligible children a combined vaccine for Measles, Mumps, Rubella and **Varicella**, the clinical name for chicken pox, from January. The chickenpox vaccine has been safely used for decades and is already part of the routine vaccine schedules in several countries. It will help reduce cases of chickenpox and protect children from serious complications that can cause hospitalisation, including bacterial infections like strep A, brain and lung inflammation and stroke. Vaccinating children against chickenpox will help to avoid days off school and nursery for children and time off work for parents needing to look after them. [Read the full details on the ICB website](#).

A range of campaign assets to encourage uptake of vaccinations are available on the [DHSC Campaign Resource Centre](#), including a [vaccine communications toolkit for universities and higher education settings](#). Alternatively, please [follow our Health in Herts Facebook page](#) and share our posts.

**Sarah Perman**

**Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council**

**Highlights**



## Hertfordshire is a Breastfeeding Friendly county!

Breastfeeding is a great way to give a baby the best start in life, with health benefits for both mum and baby. Our Deputy Executive Member for Public Health and Community Safety, Dr Allison Wren, [visited a local Family Centre during world breastfeeding week last month](#), to find out more about our [Breastfeeding Friendly scheme](#). The scheme encourages venues across Hertfordshire to provide spaces where new mums can breastfeed in a comfortable and safe environment – mums can look out for the sticker in the window to know that they will be welcomed inside and made to feel at ease. [Please watch this short video about the scheme](#) and share on your channels to raise awareness.



## Youth Ambassador programme 2024-25

Our Youth Ambassador programme equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to share mental wellbeing information with their peers and signpost to sources of support.

We've just completed the first year of the pilot in 17 primary and secondary schools across the county, supported by the [Just Talk](#) network, [WithYOUth](#) and [The Sandbox](#).

Of the 170 ambassadors who took part, 100% reported increased awareness of mental health services, 96% felt confident supporting a friend in need and 55% engaged with the [WithYOUth website](#). School staff also highlighted the positive impact on whole-school wellbeing.

Year 2 of the programme launches this month. [Contact The Sandbox](#) for more information.



## Let's end stigma

In Hertfordshire, 68% of residents told us they feel judged for their drug and alcohol use - and many avoid seeking support because of it. To help combat this, we've launched the [End Stigma campaign](#), which encourages people to 'see the person, not the problem'. Drug and alcohol dependence is not a choice, it's a serious health condition. In 2023, England recorded a record 8,274 alcohol-related deaths, and drug-related deaths are rising too. Breaking the stigma starts with understanding drug and alcohol dependency, offering support, and challenging harmful misconceptions. Please [use our campaign toolkit](#) to help promote the campaign.



## Supporting mental health in Hertfordshire

Our Grassroots Inclusion Development (GRID) Project has funded five community-led organisations to help marginalised groups improve their mental wellbeing, including those who are affected by addiction, abuse, isolation and discrimination. Child Of, Sowing Seeds Family Hub, Baby Cabaret, The Nest and Impactful Lives have been running projects for a year now, and have seen some real success stories in that time. [Visit our news blog to read about some of these achievements](#). We also provide training, infrastructure and support to the organisations running the projects, helping to increase access to mental health and suicide prevention support for some of Hertfordshire's most vulnerable residents.

**A forward look**



## Supporting communities during adverse weather

We have a duty to keep our residents safe during adverse weather events. We have shared [hot weather advice](#) widely with our communities to help them stay safe this summer. Now, our sights are turning to the colder months ahead, when we'll be promoting our [cold weather advice](#) to protect those most at risk of ill health at this time of year. UKHSA is hosting a [cold weather preparedness webinar](#) on 25 September 2025 10-11am, which we'll be attending – please join us if this is of interest. You can also sign up to receive weather alerts directly via the [weather health alerting system](#).

## Opportunities



### Violence against women and girls survey

We are working with the police to understand people's views and experiences of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Hertfordshire. The results will be used to inform and shape the new VAWG strategy and help to understand what more can be done to prevent these forms of abuse by listening to lived experiences. Everyone that lives in, works in or visits Hertfordshire is invited to [take part in the anonymous survey](#) before Friday 19 September.



### Young parents and parents-to-be survey

Parenting at a young age brings both joy and unique challenges. We offer lots of support and services for young parents and parents-to-be and we want to make sure that this meets their needs. Parents and parents-to-be aged 24 years and younger in Hertfordshire are invited to share their experiences, thoughts, needs and ideas. Responses will help inform and improve education, support and services for young people in Hertfordshire. [Please share this](#)

[confidential survey](#) with young people before Wednesday 24 September.



### **My baby's brain – free autumn training dates available**

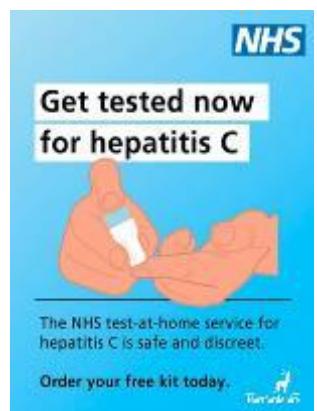
Help build strong foundations for babies' development by exploring how early relationships and everyday interactions shape the brain. This free online training is designed for professionals working with families and children aged 0–3. If you work in universal early years support, [book your place via this registration form](#). If your role involves supporting vulnerable families and children, [book your place via this registration form](#).



### **Help to shape a new public health resource**

The University of Hertfordshire is developing a new resource to make it easier for organisations to access research that supports public health policy and service design — and they want your input. [Please share this short survey through your networks](#) before Friday 12 September 2025.

## **And finally...**



### **Hepatitis C**

More than 100,000 people in England have been tested for hepatitis C through the NHS test-at-home service, a major milestone towards eliminating the virus as a public health threat. Hepatitis C can take years because it often has no symptoms, so getting tested is the only way to know if you have it. If you are at risk of exposure to hepatitis C, please remind them that [free NHS testing is available](#). In Hertfordshire, we work closely with partners including Change, Grow, Live (a smoking cessation service) and the Royal Free Hospital to offer hepatitis C testing in the community, enabling us to reach more people.



## #AskAboutAsthma

Poorly managed asthma results in over 20,000 hospital admissions in England but most asthma deaths are preventable. It is the most common long-term condition for young people, so helping them to manage their asthma is vital. The #AskAboutAsthma campaign highlights four important things to help those managing their own asthma or that of a family member.

- Get an asthma action plan in place
- Understand how to use inhalers correctly
- Schedule an asthma review – every year and after every attack
- Consider air quality and its impact on lung health

**Please follow the [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) for all the latest Public Health updates, campaign content and wellbeing advice.**

*Please share this newsletter widely through your professional networks. If you have received this from a colleague and would like to subscribe to the mailing list, [drop us a line](#).*