



Update from Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

We improve Residents' lives

We work with Integrity

We act Sustainably

We champion Equality & Fairness



October 2025

Welcome

Welcome to the October 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.



This month, I was honoured to attend a conference we co-hosted for World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September. I met many dedicated colleagues from organisations across Hertfordshire who are working to prevent suicide. Please read more below.



I was also pleased to give the welcome address to the Age Friendly stakeholder workshop, organised by Age UK and North Herts & Stevenage CVS. Age Friendly could be a game changer in creating local environments that support our residents to age well. Please read more below.

October spotlight: A collaborative approach to suicide prevention

Suicide is a profound public health challenge, one that touches so many individuals, families, and communities. While suicide rates in Hertfordshire are relatively low compared to the rest of the country, every death by suicide is one too many.

Hertfordshire takes a strong partnership approach to suicide prevention. All organisations and individuals have a role to play. Our conference brought together professionals from the health and social care system, education, and voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith-based (VCSFE) organisations across Hertfordshire to share ideas, experiences and the challenges we face.

There was a fantastic turnout, with partners sharing valuable tools and approaches that everyone can use to help keep people safe from suicide.

Our refreshed Hertfordshire Suicide Prevention Strategy aims to make Hertfordshire a place where hope is nurtured, stigma is challenged, and every life is valued and protected. The insights from the day will help to shape the strategy actions plans, ahead of its formal launch later this year.

Please take a couple of minutes to watch (and share) some [personal reflections from keynote speaker Dr Allison Wren](#), Hertfordshire County Council's Deputy Executive Member for Public Health and Community Safety.

Finally, just to flag NHS England's recently launched [staying safe from suicide e-learning session](#). It's designed to complement the [Staying safe from suicide guidance](#) for mental health practitioners.

Sarah Perman
Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council

Highlights



New offer: blood pressure checks

We're delighted to announce that our Better Health Bus now provides blood pressure checks, in addition to the current offer of NHS Health Checks, wellbeing checks, specialist stop smoking support and access to free Swap to Stop vape kits. This initiative strengthens our community-based prevention work and supports early identification of hypertension (high blood pressure) in community settings. [View the bus timetable on our website](#) and follow our [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) to share our posts.



Stoptober 2025 – Let's quit smoking together!

It's Stoptober time again, so this month we're promoting the support available to help residents quit smoking. Stop smoking support is available in many ways: face-to-face or by telephone for those wanting individual help; through the free Allen Carr Easyway online seminar for those preferring group support; or even digitally via the Smoke Free app.

Quitting with support is three times more successful than going it alone, so we're encouraging people to refer themselves via our refreshed [stop smoking webpage](#). Please follow our [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) and share our posts.



Taking vaccinations into the community

We recently teamed up with Hertfordshire Community Trust to take a vaccination bus to the University of Hertfordshire Freshers' event. Over 80 students stopped to chat to us about their health and the importance of immunisation, with 39 deciding to get their HPV, MenACWY and DTP vaccinations on the spot.

As we move into autumn, early indications suggest that we may be in for a severe flu season this side of Christmas. We'll be heavily promoting flu vaccinations, as well as the [2025 COVID-19 vaccine](#). We are encouraging everyone [eligible for a free flu vaccine](#) to take up the offer from their GP or pharmacist as soon as possible. Please follow our [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) and share our posts.

If you are entitled to a free vaccine via your employer's occupational health service, please do take up the opportunity.

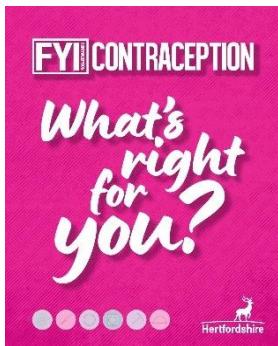


Exercise Pegasus

My team recently co-delivered the first phase of a national three-month pandemic planning and response exercise. With thousands of participants, it's the first of its kind in nearly a decade and is set to be the biggest in UK history.

Participating Local Resilience Forums are undertaking locally driven exercises based on national scenario material and completing workbooks. The exercise aims to rigorously test our capabilities, plans, protocols and procedures in the face of a potential major pandemic.

Thank you to everyone who joined the first of three tactical workshops. Your insights and feedback will be the basis for actions we will collectively take in Hertfordshire to improve our preparations for the next pandemic.



Expanding access to contraception

The College of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare recently launched [two pioneering reports on post-pregnancy contraception](#). This included a Guide for best practice, featuring the excellent work taking place at East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust to develop contraception services for women after childbirth as part of routine maternity care. Delivered in collaboration with ourselves and [Sexual Health Hertfordshire](#), this work ensures that women have timely access to the contraception they want while they are already in contact with the health system, reducing the risk of an unplanned pregnancy.

We've also developed resources to help guide conversations with women in the Trust's care, and provided support to midwives and other professionals.



Co-occurring mental health and substance use

This month, our [Drug and alcohol e-newsletter](#) shines a light on co-occurring mental health and substance use and our [End Stigma](#) campaign. People who have both mental health and drug or alcohol issues tend to 'fall through the gaps' in services, putting their health at risk. We know, as a system, that we need to do better and we are actively taking steps to improve.

Please [take a look at our campaign toolkit](#), where you can download a myth-busting poster and other campaign resources. You can also follow our [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) and share our posts.



Age Friendly Hertfordshire

I was delighted to provide the welcome address for the recent Age Friendly stakeholder workshop held at the University of Hertfordshire, which was a great success.

As part of the day, we reviewed the findings from the Hertfordshire Age friendly survey evidencing the local unmet needs of our residents, and spent time identifying priority actions to work on collaboratively, including our approach to transport, housing, communication, social participation, health and more.

There was a real buzz in the room and the day was rounded off by a wonderful talk by one of our age friendly ambassadors, reminding us all to challenge ageism and celebrate ageing. [Find out more.](#)

A forward look



Please help us recruit case studies for Clean Air Night 2026

[Clean Air Night](#) is an annual campaign about burning wood. We are looking for three people from Hertfordshire to support the campaign with their personal stories and experiences of air pollution from burning wood (or other solid fuels, such as coal) in a wood burning stove or open fire. We are particularly looking for stories from:

- People who feel their own or their family's health has been impacted by wood burning either in their own home or from other homes locally
- People who have changed their behaviour after experiencing directly or hearing about the health harms of woodburning in the home (for example, deciding to burn less often or not at all, or changing their mind about buying a wood burning stove).

[Please get in touch](#) if you, or someone you know, can help.

Opportunities



Annual Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) conference

Date: Monday 20 October

Time: 9am

Location: The Fielder Centre

The event will focus on resilience, collaboration, sustainability, and innovation in the face of funding government reorganisation, and societal and demographic changes. [Find out more.](#)

Cost of living webinars for professionals supporting families and older people

[Register for the older people webinar](#)

Date: Tuesday 4 November

Time: 2-3pm

[Register for the families webinar](#)

Date: Thursday 6 November

Time: 1-2pm

These webinars will help you confidently refer families and older people to the right support to help them live well. This includes financial support, food support and energy support. [Contact Matt Mardle for more information](#)

Domestic abuse awareness training

Herts Sunflower Champions are everyday people who can keep a look out for others that may be experiencing abuse, from hairdressers to taxi drivers, corporate workplace champions to bar and restaurant staff. This training is available to improve your confidence in understanding domestic abuse and how you can provide a safe space for someone who might need it. [Find out more](#)

Young minds matter: treating children and young people with eating disorders (online event)

Date: Wednesday 29 October

Time: 6pm

This free online event will showcase the life-changing work of the Royal Free London's children and young people's eating disorder service and share information about the wide range of treatments available. [Find out more](#)

Hertfordshire provides early help body image and eating difficulties/disorder support to children and young people through its local charity [First Steps ED](#), and also has an [Eating Disorder Team for children and young people](#) and [Disorders Service for adults](#) (via Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust).

Tobacco and Vapes Bill: call for evidence

The Department of Health and Social Care has opened a [call for evidence](#) to support the delivery of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill. We're encouraging individuals and organisations to respond before it closes on 12 November.

And finally...



Under the Bridge

[Under the Bridge](#) is a powerful new film by Child Of (one of the organisations we fund as part of our [GRID project](#)), produced by Syntax Error and featuring artist Sarah Brooks and her voice collective. The

project is also supported by Druglink and The Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead.

Sarah, a mentee in the Child Of mentorship programme, brought together a voice collective made up of people impacted by addiction, homelessness, or drawn to the healing power of music. [Watch the film](#).



New campaign: Emotional support for living with Type 2 Diabetes

NHS Hertfordshire & Mid Essex Talking Therapies has launched a new campaign to encourage those struggling with stress, low mood or anxiety related to their Type 2 Diabetes to seek help through NHS Talking Therapies services. [Find out more on the website](#) or [contact the Talking Therapies team](#) for promotional materials.

Please follow the [Health in Herts Facebook page](#) for all the latest Public Health updates, campaign content and wellbeing advice and share the posts through your own channels.

Please share this newsletter 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](#).

eNewsletters

[Drug and alcohol newsletter September 2025](#)

[Children and young people's mental health services newsletter September 2025](#)

Update from Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health – past issues

[January 2025](#)

[February 2025](#)

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