



Update from Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

We improve
Residents' lives

We work with
Integrity

We act
Sustainably

We champion
Equality & Fairness



January 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the slightly belated January's edition of my blog. I hope this year has got off to a good start for you all. This blog aims to keep professionals who have an interest in Hertfordshire Public Health up to date with what's going on locally.

As you know, December to February is heavily focussed on the budget setting process for the following year at Hertfordshire County Council; and despite a challenging financial picture, we are setting an ambitious and affordable budget which will enable us to spend **£1.2 billion providing vital services.**

We are however among the worst council's affected by the Government's new funding formula which cuts over **£40 million in grant funding a year by 2028/29.** The settlement for Public Health is also challenging, with only small increases in our funding for the next three years. At the same time the demand for and costs of delivering our good and outstanding services is growing.

There is good news though. From my area, we are investing £2.8 million with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and Central East Integrated Care Board in a new comprehensive advocacy service for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls. We are also investing £2.9m in four important new projects through the Prevention and Investment Fund: a partnership with School Food Matters to transform the food environment in schools, two projects with NHS partners and the University of Hertfordshire to support adults facing health-related barriers to employment, and a partnership led by Age UK Hertfordshire to improve the health, wellbeing and inclusion of Hertfordshire's older residents.

We will keep you informed as and when the budget is approved. But for now, please do read about the great examples of partnership working from all of us, we have much to celebrate together.

Sarah Perman, Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council

Highlights

Vape Brain sculpture tours local schools



Youth vaping is a significant public health challenge, and one that touches the lives of children and young people across the county. Our new youth vaping prevention campaign that has been co-produced in partnership with local young people is currently in the middle of its tour around our schools.

The campaign, called 'Vape Brain', was inspired by focus groups, survey feedback and informal conversations with young people, who spoke about the mental health impact of addiction to nicotine vapes and the desire to open-up conversations about the subject. It aims to raise awareness of the risks associated with addiction to nicotine vapes and help young people make informed choices not to vape.

An art installation created by young art students from Hertford regional college and a PSHE lesson plan to help teachers have important conversations with pupils and help raise awareness of the dangers of vaping for young people has also been produced. Even the BBC covered the story '['Vape Brain' sculpture highlights dangers to teens - BBC News](#)

To find out more about our campaign please visit: [Hertfordshire County Council | New campaign to highlight the risks of youth vaping](#)

Defibrillator and Bleed Kit Project



More defibrillator and bleed kits continue to be installed across the county. Thirty schools and fifteen fire stations now have publicly accessible defibrillators, while all Gypsy and Roma Traveller sites have one, except for Ver Meadows which will be installed at a later date. It was a pleasure to see that in December, our defibrillator and bleed kit partner, Hearts for Herts Charity, was honoured with the prestigious King's Award. In 2025 there were 26 activations at schools and 25 at fire stations.

Hertfordshire Directory

The Hertfordshire Directory is a free website used by professionals and the public to find services, groups, and activities across the county. The Directory has recently been updated and improved

It contains thousands of listings across a range of useful categories, from large organisations like One YMCA and Citizens Advice to a wealth of small and mid-sized charity and voluntary groups, and individuals working in and supporting their local communities. To find out more and to add a listing please visit [Home | Hertfordshire Directory](#)

Exploring the Power of Green Social Prescribing

A recent seminar took place at the University of Hertfordshire with partners and stakeholders, exploring the power of green social prescribing and how to build healthier, connected communities.

There was the opportunity for those of us who work in health and social care, or the voluntary and community sector, to focus on what we need to help connect people to nature to improve their health and wellbeing.

Operation Pegasus

From September to December last year, colleagues from across our Local Resilience Forum took part in Exercise Pegasus - a national Tier 1 pandemic response exercise and the first of its kind in nearly a decade. It was marked to be the biggest in UK history.

They participated in tactical workshops and strategic co-ordination calls to test Hertfordshire's capabilities, plans, protocols, and procedures in the event of another major pandemic. In addition to submitting three workbook submissions, our LRF has tested its draft pandemic plan and gathered rich learning from across all partners. This learning has helped form an LRF action plan to ensure Hertfordshire is prepared in the advent of any future pandemic, alongside more robust partnerships, processes and plans.

National HIV Testing Week 2026

National HIV Testing Week 2026 starts on the 9th February to promote regular HIV testing across England, with a particular focus on groups most affected by HIV. Regular testing helps reduce the number of people living with undiagnosed HIV and supports earlier diagnosis, which leads to better health outcomes and reduced onward transmission. There is no better time than during National HIV Testing Week to encourage people to get tested and know their HIV status. Across Hertfordshire, local sexual health services will be out in communities offering free and confidential HIV testing.

Public Health will also be running targeted social media advertising in areas of Hertfordshire where uptake of HIV testing is lower than the England average. These areas include Dacorum, East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Three Rivers.

You can find out more about National HIV Testing Week 2026 by reading the briefing [here](#).

To order a free and confidential HIV test, [click here](#)

There's also a short video on testing [It starts with me - HIV self-test kits](#)

Hertfordshire data on HIV including testing and diagnosis rates can be found [here](#)

News from our partners

NHS roll out vaccine to protect children against chicken pox



Since the beginning of January, the NHS began a roll out of an additional vaccine to the routine childhood programme to protect against chickenpox. The combined MMRV vaccination means many thousands of children will gain additional protection against chickenpox for the first time in the UK. Just 2 doses of this vaccine will provide long-lasting protection against 4 serious diseases: measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (also

known as varicella). Further details including how children will be offered the vaccine can be found in the link below.

UKHSA blog: ['What is the MMRV vaccine and is my child eligible?'](#)

UKHSA blog: ['Changes to the childhood vaccination schedule from January 2026'](#)

Opportunities

Public Health training website

The newly launched website hosts training courses offered by the Public Health team, all of which are free.

It covers a range of courses on topics such as gambling awareness, dementia, spotting the signs (of suicide risk) and many more. All course details and how to join can be found on [View the website](#)

And finally...

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.](#)