



**Update from Hertfordshire's  
Director of Public Health**

We improve  
Residents' lives

We work with  
Integrity

We act  
Sustainably

We champion  
Equality & Fairness

Hertfordshire

## Welcome

The Kent meningitis outbreak led to a particularly busy March for Public Health in Hertfordshire. At the time of writing this, UKHSA has been notified of 21 confirmed cases of invasive meningococcal disease directly related to the outbreak in Canterbury. Sadly, there have been 2 deaths since the start of the incident. There have been no cases in Hertfordshire linked to the outbreak, and the risk to Hertfordshire residents is low.

We understand the levels of anxiety that the situation generated particularly for parents, carers and young people. I'd like to thank everyone involved in keeping residents of Hertfordshire safe and informed. Community pharmacies, GP practices, A&E departments, schools, colleges, the University of Hertfordshire, and my own Public Health team have all played an important part in the response in Hertfordshire.

Around 300 to 400 cases of meningococcal disease are diagnosed in England every year. However, the rapid emergence of cases in this outbreak was genuinely unusual. Fifteen cases emerging within 48 hours is not typical in a meningococcal outbreak. The transmission seen in this instance is likely to reflect some combination of factors, including close and prolonged contact among many young adults in the nightclub, characteristics of the outbreak strain, alongside variable immunity and other factors.

UKHSA have developed a toolkit of resources to support awareness of symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia, including this poster [Meningitis: Don't ignore the signs and symptoms posters](#). The UKHSA blog also provides other useful resources [Meningitis outbreak: what you need to know – UK Health Security Agency](#)

Please continue to share my blog with colleagues and networks, and encourage anyone who may have missed recent updates to subscribe by emailing [PHComms@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:PHComms@hertfordshire.gov.uk), especially as some contacts have changed

roles or email addresses. Your help ensures our messages continue to reach the people who need them most.

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

## Highlights

### **Better Health Bus gets better!**



Hertfordshire's Better Health Bus is expanding its offer after a successful launch, supporting residents' health and wellbeing across the county. Since July 2024, the mobile service has visited over 150 community events, carried out over 1,200 NHS health and blood pressure checks, and engaged in more than 4,000 conversations with local people. Now, a new Community Support Worker, on-board emergency equipment, sexual health testing kits and the availability of opioid overdose drug naloxone, will further strengthen the support available. In the coming months, partner organisations will also join the service to offer guidance on infant feeding, sexual health and immunisation. Delivered by Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team and drug & alcohol partner Change Grow Live, these enhancements will help ensure even more residents can access timely advice, early intervention and vital health checks close to home. Find out where the Better Health Bus is visiting next at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/betterhealthbus](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/betterhealthbus).

### **Dementia Friendly Accreditation**

The Dementia Friendly Hertfordshire Accreditation Scheme is supporting organisations to make their services accessible for people living with dementia. It provides guidance on introducing staff training, improving signage, and creating more welcoming environments. Organisations that achieve accreditation will be listed on an interactive

map on the Memory Support Hertfordshire website, helping families and carers easily locate dementia-friendly venues such as cafés, hairdressers, sports facilities and public services. The new scheme supports the county's wider Dementia Strategy and is the result of collaboration between public sector and community partners and will replace the former Alzheimer's Society programme and is the first digital scheme of its kind in the East of England. The scheme is funded by Hertfordshire County Council, developed by the Mental Health, Learning Disability, and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership (MHLDN), and delivered by Memory Support Hertfordshire. If you would like to learn more about the Dementia Friendly Accreditation including how you can get involved, please visit the [Memory Support Hertfordshire website](#).

### **Local Government Reform (LGR) Public Health workshop**



On 27 February, senior Public Health leads joined colleagues from Hertfordshire's 11 local authorities, NHS partners, Health and Care Partnerships, and the voluntary sector for a Local Government Reform (LGR) workshop at Robertson House. The session explored how partners can strengthen prevention, tackle health inequalities and prepare for the new unitary council in April 2028. Early discussions highlighted the wide range of existing public health work and a shared ambition to build on it.

Colleagues identified several opportunities LGR could bring, including a more consistent, joined-up approach; reduced fragmentation and simpler service pathways; stronger voluntary sector partnerships; improved data sharing and potential for a "one front door" model; and greater scope to design services around inclusion groups. There was optimism that LGR could help "level up" prevention, widen reach and support a stronger place-based approach.

This event marks a positive first step in working with partners to shape a prevention-focused approach for the new unitary councils.

## Social care staff flu competition



Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team, together with colleagues from the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association, recently ran a winter competition to encourage social care staff across the county to take up the flu vaccination. Care homes with the highest staff uptake were entered into a prize draw, and congratulations go to Bushey House Beaumont, this year's winner, who achieved an outstanding 100% staff flu vaccination rate and received fresh fruit and muffin hampers to enjoy. Flu vaccination remains a vital public health measure, particularly for older people and those with underlying health conditions, yet national uptake has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. To help address this, fun incentives are being used to boost uptake among social care staff, who play a crucial role in protecting at-risk groups by reducing the spread of flu, supporting the resilience of care services, and easing pressure on the NHS during the busy winter period.

## News from our partners

### Young people shape new NHS school vaccination campaign

Young people across the East of England have played a key role in shaping a new NHS school vaccination campaign launched in celebration of HPV Awareness Day on 4 March. The East of England Community and School Aged Immunisation Service (CSAIS), supported by NHS England, worked with pupils, schools and clinicians to co-design fresh, youth-friendly materials that explain the full range of school-age vaccinations, including HPV, MenACWY, Td/IPV and MMR. Designed to boost understanding and build trust, the new resources respond directly to young people's feedback that existing information felt too complex or unengaging. Featuring videos, posters and social media assets in multiple languages, the campaign aims to make vaccination information more accessible for every family and support informed conversations about protection against serious diseases. The launch highlights the

importance of staying up to date with routine teenage vaccinations and encourages young people to take advantage of the simple, effective protection they offer. [Watch a video about teen vaccinations here.](#)

### **Young Carers Offer**

From 1 April 2026, Hertfordshire County Council will be bringing support for young carers in-house, when the young carer contract with Carers in Hertfordshire comes to an end, integrating it fully within the council's services. The existing Carers in Hertfordshire contract for adult carers will remain in place.

Work has been ongoing with young carers, families and professionals to make sure the change is smooth, and the support will continue and stay very similar. This includes assessments, help with managing caring responsibilities, regular reviews, ensuring the voices of young carers inform the support they receive, and support in preparing for adulthood. A new Young Carers webpage has been developed in collaboration with young carers and their families and includes information about the support available, team contact details, and 'a Day in the Life of' form to register a young carer online so that we can ensure they can get the support they need. [A Young Carers webinar is scheduled for Thursday 23rd April, 11:30am-12:30pm, offering partner professionals a briefing on the new model, the tools available, and the steps involved in the registration process.](#)

### **Smokefree Places Consultation Launched**

The Department of Health and Social Care has launched a 12-week consultation on proposals to extend smoke-free places and introduce new heated-tobacco-free and vape-free areas across England.

These measures support the upcoming Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which will be the most significant public health intervention since the 2007 smokefree legislation. It intends to protect the public, particularly children, pregnant women and medically vulnerable people, from second-hand harms of smoking, vaping and heated tobacco use. The consultation is open until 23:59 on Friday 8th May and can be accessed [here](#).

### **Children's Commissioner for England guide for parents**

The Children's Commissioner for England has published ['What I Wish My Parents or Carers Knew...'](#), a supportive guide designed to help parents and carers navigate the

fast-changing digital world their children experience every day. With modern childhood looking very different from our own, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or unsure how best to keep up. This resource offers clear, practical advice to make conversations about online life easier and to help adults feel more confident in supporting children to stay safe, happy and empowered in their digital lives.

### **Mental health support milestone with Togetherall**

We are pleased to share that through our partnership with Togetherall, we have now supported 3,000 residents with their mental health in Hertfordshire – 73% of which were not engaged with any other mental health support.

Togetherall is a free mental wellbeing support platform for all Hertfordshire residents aged 16+. It is available 24/7, 365 days a year, and is clinically moderated. Alongside peer-to-peer support where users can start discussions around their own mental health and wellbeing, the platform offers a range of modules that residents can complete in their own time, at their own pace. These include courses on:

- Managing anger
- Assertiveness training
- Cutting down on your drinking
- Coping with grief

### **Interested in learning more?**

New users can register here (free for all Hertfordshire residents): [togetherall.com/hertfordshire](https://togetherall.com/hertfordshire)

Existing users can [log in here](#).

## **Opportunities**

### **Volunteers Needed for Evaluating Resistance Training for Brain Health**

Join this great opportunity to boost your wellbeing while supporting important local research! The School of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences at the University of Hertfordshire is inviting community members to take part in a supervised resistance exercise programme at the Institute of Sport. They are looking to recruit both controls and exercise participants, the programme runs twice a week for six weeks. (Controls are also required who won't carry out the exercise but will still get a full personalised health

assessment.) They're looking for adults aged 50-80 who are generally healthy and not currently doing regular resistance training. Participants will receive a free, in depth health assessment and memory test report. While the study doesn't offer financial compensation, parking costs at the university will be fully covered. Please register your interest as recruitment is needed to start over the next few weeks.

**Location:** Institute of Sport, University of Hertfordshire, de Havilland Campus, Hatfield, AL10 9EU - [Register here to take part](#). For more information contact Christine Caine at [c.caine2@herts.ac.uk](mailto:c.caine2@herts.ac.uk).

## And finally...

Our gambling-related harms project continues to strengthen its work across Hertfordshire, through a targeted social media campaign, to raise awareness of support services available and the rollout of our gambling awareness training offer for professionals, carers and volunteers., It's estimated 38,000 people experience problem gambling in Hertfordshire and 78,000 are affected by someone else's gambling. [This short video shares the experiences of people affected by gambling](#).

Our training offer, delivered in partnership with Breakeven, has been particularly impactful, equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to identify signs of harm and support residents who may be affected.

Please encourage your team to join this training. It's everyone's business to support colleagues, family members, and our wider communities, and this training will help strengthen that. More dates will be added over the next few weeks.

We offer two free courses for anyone in a public-facing role or anyone wanting to learn more about gambling-related harm:

### **1.5 hour Bet You Can Help Now! (Online)**

- Wed 13 May, 1pm – 2.30pm
- Thurs 2 July, 1pm -2.30pm
- Wed 16 Sept, 10am – 11.30am

### **Level 2 Bet You Can Help (In-person)**

Tues 14 July, 9.45am – 4pm

[Book your place onto this trainings - limited spaces available.](#)

[For supporting information visit our Gambling webpage.](#)

