

Public Health Bulletin 7th January 2020

Produced by NHS libraries in Thames Valley and Wessex

Please find below a list of news items from the past fortnight that may be of interest to those involved in public health. This Bulletin provides topical news and reports of relevance to public health teams, community health practitioners and anyone with an interest in health promotion. All content and links are provided for information only and we do not sponsor, endorse or otherwise approve of any mentioned website or the contents of the news items. Please refer to the terms and conditions of the relevant website should you wish to reproduce any of the information.

Details of alternative current awareness services which cover more academic/specialist sources of information can be found in the section *Other Bulletins*. Your local NHS library service can assist you in accessing other current awareness services/tailored alerts, locating peer reviewed journal articles and answer any other queries you may have regarding finding information.

The information about each news item only gives a brief overview so we recommend you view the original source by clicking on the title (or Ctrl+Click in the word document).

Please contact your local NHS library service if you no longer wish to receive this Bulletin, or if you know of anyone else who would like to join the mailing list. The Bulletins are also available on the Thames Valley Public Health Network at: <http://www.oxsph.org/bulletins.html> and the Wessex Public Health Network at: <http://www.wessexphnetwork.org.uk/resources/public-health-updates.aspx>

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Alcohol misuse

Men with alcohol problems 'six times more likely to abuse partner'

23 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Men who are dependent on alcohol or drugs are six or seven times more likely to be involved in domestic abuse against women than others, according to an extensive new study.

Black and ethnic minority groups

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) network

The NHS England BME staff network believes that, in order for every individual to reach their full potential, there must be no fear of discrimination or prejudice and a belief that career opportunities or experience of work is not predetermined by ethnicity, nationality or colour. Membership is open to NHS England staff from BME heritage, and those with a positive interest in driving forward race equality within NHS England as an individual employer. We recognise that current data indicates differential experience and outcomes for BME staff compared to those who are White, White Irish and White Other. However, with the shift in England's demographics and to be inclusive we are using the widest terminology of BME for membership of the network.

Children and young people

Neglected children end up with 'smaller brains'

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

An early life full of neglect, deprivation and adversity leads to people growing up with smaller brains, a study suggests. The researchers at King's College London were following adopted children who spent time in "hellhole" Romanian orphanages. They grew up with brains 8.6% smaller than other adoptees. The researchers said it was the "most compelling" evidence of the impact on the adult brain.

The children at risk of eating themselves to death

26 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Patients with Prader-Willi syndrome - named after the two researchers who discovered it in 1956 - suffer from an unrelenting, insatiable hunger.

Chronic conditions

Improved NHS migraine care to save thousands of hospital stays

1 January 2020

Source: NHS News <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

Headache and migraine sufferers will benefit from better diagnosis and care as part of the NHS Long Term Plan to improve local health services, avoiding up to 16,500 emergency hospital admissions every year.

Good sleep linked to lower risk of heart attack and stroke

19 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

Doctors have long suspected a link between unhealthy sleep behaviours and cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke. Researchers created a 'healthy sleep score', which combined 5 factors:

- being a morning person rather than a 'night owl'
- sleeping 7 to 8 hours most nights
- never or rarely having difficulty getting to sleep or waking in the night
- not snoring
- not dozing off during the daytime without meaning to

They applied the score to more than 385,000 people from the UK without cardiovascular disease, who were followed up for an average of 8.5 years. Researchers were interested to see how their sleep score affected their chance of developing heart disease or stroke.

Communicable diseases

[Flu cases in Wales increase over holiday period](#)

2 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The number of flu cases in Wales has risen over the Christmas period - but it is still well below the numbers during the outbreak of 2010-11. The rate of patients with flu seeing their GP remains at "medium intensity". But because surgeries were only open for three days over the holidays, the rate has been adjusted to 37.1 cases per 100,000 patients.

Doctors say people can cut the spread by coughing or sneezing into tissues, disposing of them and washing hands.

[Could relatives of measles virus jump from animals to us?](#)

1 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Some European countries, including the UK, lost their measles-free status and many developing countries, especially parts of Africa, Asia and Oceania are seeing frequent outbreaks.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is experiencing a protracted outbreak of over a quarter of a million cases and more than 5,000 deaths, mainly in children under-five. And the reason for this measles upturn? Declining uptake of measles vaccination. You need to immunise over 90% of a population to protect it from measles outbreaks. In DRC immunisation rates are less than 60%.

Diet & nutrition

[Veganism: Why are vegan diets on the rise?](#)

2 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Across Britain, people are spending more money on vegan products, and plant-based diets are trending online.

With major supermarkets catching on and stocking up on vegan-friendly food - BBC News asks what's behind the rise?

[London Fire Brigade nutritionist helps firefighters keep fit](#)

3 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

London Fire Brigade has taken steps to help keep its staff in shape.

Firefighter Greg Lessons is the first dedicated nutritionist to be based within a fire and rescue service in the UK. He helps his colleagues with their diet and nutrition.

[Scrap 'quick-fix diets and tea-toxes' this New Year](#)

31 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

If your New Year resolution is to lose some weight, avoid fad diets, because they don't work and can be harmful, says NHS England's top doctor. Diet pills, 'tea-toxes' and appetite suppressant products are no 'quick fix', says Prof Stephen Powis, NHS medical director. Products making this claim can have side-effects, including diarrhoea and heart issues, he warns. Getting in shape safely takes time and requires eating sensibly, and exercise. As the public gets ready for New Year's Eve, Prof Powis also warned of the dangers of 'party drips' or quick fix hangover cures.

[Can 2 apples a day help keep the doctor away?](#)

17 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

The story in The Sun is based on a small trial that found that eating 2 apples a day for 8 weeks can slightly reduce high cholesterol levels, by up to 4%. Apples are high in fibre and polyphenols (chemicals thought to have various health benefits).

Disability

['How Pokémon Go has changed my life'](#)

1 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Pokémon Go was a record-breaking phenomenon when it launched in 2016, tempting gamers out of their homes to capture cute and colourful "creatures" outdoors. While some of its original players may have moved on to virtual pastures new, many others have continued to play, making it a permanent part of their lives.

Matthew Gibson, the proud collector of more than 500 Pikachu soft toys, "didn't want to go out much" before Pokémon Go launched. But he was "fantastically excited" when the game was released and says it has led him to places he would never have explored otherwise.

Drug Misuse

'Why I stuck by my drug addict son'

31 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Martin Hopkins has been a drug addict for most of his adult life. The BBC filmed him in Plymouth two years ago when he was last seen heading off to buy heroin.

We caught up again with Martin, who has been clean for 14 months, and spoke with him and his mother about their journey together.

Homeless mental health and drugs services 'broken' in Wales

19 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Treatment services for homeless people with drug and mental health problems are "broken", assembly members said.

Funding is too low to cope with a "rough sleeping crisis" in Wales, according to a committee report which also cited a lack of leadership.

Environmental health

The entrepreneur stopping food waste

6 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The BBC's weekly The Boss series profiles different business leaders from around the world. This week we speak to Mette Lykke, co-founder of fitness tracker Endomondo, and chief executive of food waste app, Too Good To Go.

Health services administration

NHS in Wales 'faces more pressure than ever'

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The NHS in Wales is under more pressure than ever, a nurses' leader has said.

It comes after Hywel Dda health board cancelled planned operations at four hospitals following "an extraordinary weekend" of added pressure. Helen Whyley, director for the Royal College of Nursing in Wales, said "I speak to members regularly across Wales and the pressure is more than it has ever been. "There's a number of complex reasons for that," she added.

"What it means is, on the frontline for staff every day, it is a real battle to make sure patients get the care they require," Mrs Whyley told BBC Radio Wales Breakfast with Claire Summers.

'Outdated' IT leaves NHS staff with 15 different computer logins

4 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

IT systems in the NHS are so outdated that staff have to log in to up to 15 different systems to do their jobs. Doctors can find themselves using different logins for everything from ordering x-rays and getting lab results to accessing A&E records and rotas.

The government in England said it was looking to streamline the systems as part of an IT upgrade. Around £40 million is being set aside to help hospitals and clinics introduce single-system logins in the next year.

[Why 2020 will be a crucial year for the NHS](#)

29 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The new government is prioritising the NHS - that was made abundantly clear in the Queen's Speech unveiled the week before Christmas. Promises have been made on everything from money to staffing. So 2020 looks set to be a crucial year as ministers seek to meet the challenges facing the health service in England head-on. But what are the most pressing issues for the Westminster Parliament to address in the year ahead?

HIV & AIDS

[Scotland 'could have helped hundreds avoid HIV'](#)

3 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Hundreds of people could have avoided HIV infection from contaminated blood products if help had been sought from Scotland, new evidence suggests.

A letter dated January 1990 shows a Scottish facility had spare capacity to produce the blood clotting agent Factor VIII, used to treat haemophiliacs.

Instead, English health authorities continued to import large amounts of Factor VIII from risky sources abroad.

Much of this blood was contaminated with HIV, the virus that causes Aids.

Men's health

[Rhod Gilbert fronts male infertility campaign HIMfertility](#)

19 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

"It's time to talk tackle," says comedian Rhod Gilbert who is fronting a campaign to discuss male infertility.

Gilbert says he knew "almost nothing" about male infertility until he and his wife experienced difficulties in starting a family.

He believes "most men think infertility is mainly a female issue" when couples struggle to conceive.

He is using his experiences to back the campaign, HIMfertility, encouraging men to talk more about it and to seek help.

Mental health

[A chatbot pulled me out of a 'really dark place'](#)

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Vivibot is offered through GRYT, an app-based social community for people affected by cancer. Dozens of similar services are available, which chat with their users on matters of mental health. They offer mood reports and tips on how to improve their mental and emotional state.

"These chatbots are a great first step for people who may be experiencing sad or depressed mood or anxiety to reclaim their mental health," says Danielle Ramo, director of research at Hopelab, which designed Vivibot.

['Repeated failings' at St Andrew's Healthcare mental health charity](#)

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

A mental health hospital charity has been told it made "repeated and systemic failings" in its leadership by health inspectors.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) raised several concerns at St Andrew's Healthcare, based in Northampton.

They included a two-year backlog to address issues found by the CQC in previous inspections.

[Cleveland Police spending time on long term sick leave due to mental health](#)

6 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Cleveland Police officers are spending more time on long term sick leave with mental health issues than for any other reason.

Figures from a Freedom of Information request by BBC Tees have revealed the force had 132 officers absent last year because of mental health, compared to 62 for all other sickness.

[Mental health: Expert tips on tackling anxiety and depression](#)

2 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Top internet searches for 18 to 34-year-olds often include questions about mental health.

Here, we ask the experts to tackle some of the most commonly-asked queries from Wales and across the UK.

[Eating disorder hospital admissions rise sharply](#)

2 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Hospital admissions for eating disorders have risen by more than a third (37%) across all age groups over the last two years, figures show.

Experts described the figures as "worrying" and urged the government to promote early intervention.

There were 19,040 admissions for eating disorders in 2018/19, up from 16,558 the year before and 13,885 in 2016/17.

The NHS Digital data for England found the most common age last year for patients with anorexia was 13 to 15.

NHS fighting back against rising tide of gambling ill health

28 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

The NHS is facing a rising tide of gambling related ill health as more betting addicts than ever before are being taken to hospital.

New data released today show a record number of admissions last year related to gambling addiction, including care for severe mental ill health conditions like psychosis.

Obesity

Exercise advice on food labels could 'change eating habits'

11 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

"Exercise advice on food labels could help to tackle the obesity crisis," The Guardian reports. Labelling on packaged food has to include information such as the number of calories and grams of fat. However, there's evidence that many people do not know what these measures mean. Researchers involved in a new study have suggested converting calories into the amount of exercise needed to burn them off – for example, labels explaining that you would need to run for:

- 13 minutes after drinking a 330ml can of fizzy drink
- 22 minutes after eating a standard size chocolate bar
- 42 minutes after eating a shop-bought chicken and bacon sandwich

They hoped that doing this would encourage people to choose less calorific foods or eat less of them.

Obesity in children may be linked to brain structure

11 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

"Obese children have a thinner region of their brain which controls decision-making," reports Mail Online. Researchers examined brain scans of more than 3,000 children aged 9 and 10 years old in the US. They looked at the thickness of their brain in areas called the cortex, and compared these to each child's body mass index (BMI). The

researchers found that 18 out of 66 cortex areas, mainly in the very front of the brain (prefrontal cortex), were significantly thinner in children with a higher BMI.

[No link found between caesarean section and obesity in boys](#)

9 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

The recent rise in the number of babies being born by caesarean section has been linked to the rise in childhood obesity. Previously, scientists have suggested that babies born by caesarean section might have missed out on exposure to beneficial bacteria from a vaginal birth, which might have made them more likely to grow up overweight. However, this latest study suggests that may not be true.

Older people

[Little boxes of love help families with dementia](#)

29 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

"Little Boxes of Love" are being given out to carers to support them while they look after a loved one with dementia. Created by staff at Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, they include tissues, sweets and a candle and cards with encouraging messages. Given to carers on Marsden Ward at Monkwearmouth Hospital in Sunderland, it is hoped the items will help make them smile or cheer them up when they are feeling down or alone.

[TV repeats and seasonal songs can help people with dementia](#)

22 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

While many of us might get a bit bored of the same old Christmas films, TV repeats and seasonal songs being rolled out each year, people with dementia can actually benefit from a touch of festive familiarity.

Physical activity

[Running marathon cuts years off 'artery age'](#)

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Training for and completing a marathon improves the health of a new runner's arteries, cutting about four years off their "vascular age", a study suggests. Researchers from Barts and University College London tested 138 novice runners attempting the London Marathon. Over six months of training, their arteries regained some youthful elasticity, which should reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. And their blood pressure fell as much as if they had been prescribed pills.

[Derbyshire cancer survivor walks across Europe](#)

4 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

A woman who survived ovarian cancer is walking 5,500 miles across Europe to raise money for charity. Ursula Martin, 39, from Ashbourne, hitchhiked to Kiev in Ukraine and is walking back to the UK. The writer and rambler has previously walked 3,700 miles around Wales, which she undertook after she was diagnosed with the disease.

[How AI fitness apps now rival personal trainers](#)

4 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Apps that use a mixture of machine learning, image recognition and motion tracking to correct your form during a workout are about to go on show at the CES technology show in Las Vegas.

BBC's Chris Fox tried Vay Sports, GymFitty and Yoganotch to see whether they could be as motivational as a human personal trainer.

[How to get started on that January fitness resolution](#)

4 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

It's time to do something about that resolution. You remember the one, don't you? The one about getting yourself in shape?

But it can be quite overwhelming - with social media filled with posts about body transformations and adverts for cut price gym membership.

If you're feeling the pressure, Radio 1 Newsbeat has been asking for a few tips to get you started.

Safety

[Substances released at Southall site are 'threat to health'](#)

7 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Toxic substances released while a 150-year-old gas works is being redeveloped have reached levels that "present a threat to health", an expert has said. Residents living near the site in Southall, west London, have complained of poor health and breathing difficulties since work began in 2016.

Screening

[Should younger adults get their cholesterol levels checked?](#)

4 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/>

The Guardian. A team of researchers developed a model that shows the risk of having a heart attack or stroke by age 75, for people of different ages, depending on their so-called "bad" cholesterol (non-high density lipoprotein, or non-HDL cholesterol). Non-HDL cholesterol (which includes LDL cholesterol, as well as other types of "bad" cholesterol) raises the chances of developing cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including heart attack and stroke. But most current models used by doctors look at the risk over a 10-year period and apply this risk to people from middle age onwards.

Sexual health

[Once a month contraceptive pill in development](#)

5 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

Researchers in the US are developing a pill that can stay in the stomach for a month, slowly releasing hormones to prevent pregnancy. The team have developed a capsule designed to be swallowed. Once in the stomach, the capsule dissolves and a 6-sided star structure unravels and gradually releases the synthetic hormone levonorgestrel.

Smoking

Smokers past and present 'live in more pain'

1 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

People who smoke, and even those who have given up, report living in more pain than those who have never picked up the habit, a report suggests.

The findings are based on an analysis of data from more than 220,000 people conducted by UCL.

Social & economic issues

Are your friends bad for your health?

1 January 2020

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

At the start of a new year, lots of people will resolve to make a healthy lifestyle change.

Many find resolutions like cutting back on unhealthy snacks or taking part in a weekend fitness class easier when friends and family are making the same changes.

However, not all decisions affecting our health are intentional, as we copy the behaviour of friends, colleagues and family who we relate to and admire.

'Man on the Moon' moment - the year's big breakthroughs

31 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

It has been a remarkable year of promise in medical science - from inventing ways of treating the untreatable to reversing paralysis and keeping the brain alive after death.

Benyamin Hussain death: Family warns of one-punch dangers

31 December 2019

Source: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The family of a teenager who died on a night out has warned about "the damage that one punch can do". Benyamin Hussain, 18, died from a catastrophic brain injury after being hit while visiting a school friend in Cambridge on 15 November 2018. A rugby player was cleared of manslaughter by a jury, having claimed he acted in self-defence. Mr Hussain's father, Shabir, said he believed "people don't realise how much their own power can do" with a punch.

Women's health

Weight loss linked to lower chance of getting breast cancer for women over 50

18 December 2019

Source: NHS News <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

Previous research has shown that the chances of getting breast cancer are higher for women who are overweight or obese. This may be because overweight women produce more oestrogen. Oestrogen can cause breast cells to grow, which could lead to cancer if the cells grow uncontrollably. However, there is not much evidence about whether losing weight, especially in later life, can lower this increased chance of getting breast cancer.

Local news: []

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Other Bulletins

Super Six Bulletin

This is a weekly Bulletin that details original articles in the BMJ, JAMA, New England Journal of Medicine and The Lancet, Annals of Internal Medicine and Annals of Emergency Medicine
<http://cash.libraryservices.nhs.uk/subject-a-z/m/medicine/major-research/>

Daily Health News

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