

Health Protection Update No.8

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Health protection seeks to prevent or reduce harm caused by communicable disease and minimise the health impact from environmental hazards. The team provides scrutiny and challenge, acts as an advisor to local partners, reviews local health protection needs, supports collaborative working and commissioning between organisations, seeks assurance and acts as an advocate to ensuring equity in the reduction of risks to health of the local population.

Whooping Cough infections remain high

Whooping cough cases (also known as Pertussis) have continued to increase across England with 858 new laboratory confirmed cases reported to the UK Health Security Agency by the end of March 2024. This increase in cases has made headlines across all aspects of the media, especially at the beginning of May 2024 when sadly 5 infant deaths were reported related to Whooping Cough infection.

The disease affects not only the individual but also their caregivers, as the symptoms can be very distressing including:

- A persistent cough which can sometimes result in vomiting.
- Night-time disruptions as the child struggles to sleep.
- The child's reluctance to eat regularly due to the fear of coughing.
- Extreme tiredness for both the child and caregivers.
- A sense of helplessness in caregivers due to the severity of the symptoms.

UKHSA continues to encourage parents to check that their children are vaccinated against whooping cough, which is offered to all infants at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age (as part of the 6-in-1 combination vaccine) with an additional dose included in the pre-school booster vaccine.

[Latest NHS advice on management of Whooping Cough](#)

We are also keen that women that are pregnant take up the offer of vaccination for each pregnancy. [Further advice can be found on the NHS website](#)

Latest Communicable Disease information

Covid -19

The provision of free COVID-19 lateral flow device (LFD) tests for managing outbreaks in higher-risk settings ended in England on April 1st. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of tests conducted. However, testing will continue for individuals at the highest risk from COVID-19 to support diagnosis and access to treatments. Although recent weeks have seen a slight increase, the prevalence of the disease remained low throughout April and May, with hospital admissions at levels similar to those seen in the summer of 2023.

Measles

Measles cases are still being reported throughout the East Midlands, but none have been confirmed among Derbyshire residents in 2024. The majority of cases have been detected in the Birmingham and Leicester areas, and although the numbers remain higher, they appear to have stabilized. The UKHSA has emphasized the importance of vaccinating children following a recent surge in cases in London.

Winter Illnesses

The prevalence of flu and RSV has now returned to pre-winter levels, with very few cases being reported.

COVID-19 Spring vaccination campaign

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has confirmed its advice for a 2024 spring coronavirus (COVID-19) booster programme.

Similar to previous spring and autumn campaigns, the Committee's advice is to offer the vaccine to those at high risk of serious disease and who are therefore most likely to benefit from vaccination.

The following groups will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine this spring:

- adults aged 75 years and over.
- residents in a care home for older adults
- individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

The NHS national booking system is open now and anyone eligible can make a booking by following the link below

[Book, cancel or change a COVID-19 vaccination appointment](#)

The vaccination offer is available up until the end of June

How the Public Health Community Response Fund is Making a Difference

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic many voluntary and community sector organisations in Derbyshire faced unprecedented challenges seeing increased demand for their services and support for those most vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the already existing health inequalities across Derbyshire, meaning poorer outcomes for those already disadvantaged. Community and voluntary organisations play an essential role in helping tackle these.

Derbyshire County Council's Covid Community Fund has provided various organisations with grants for over three years and in this time some excellent projects have taken place in communities around Derbyshire. This has enabled direct support to Derbyshire resident to enable recovery from the pandemic.

The Covid Community Fund is available for applications until 30th June 2024 and organisations can apply for funding up to £2000 for formally constituted groups and £250 for non-constituted groups. Examples of eligibility criteria for application can be found below;

- support to increase COVID-19 vaccination uptake.
- protect people most vulnerable to COVID-19
- increase mental health and wellbeing and support individual and community resilience.
- promote safer behaviours to reduce future risk of infection.
- directly address health inequalities arising from, or made worse, by the pandemic

To find out more and for applications please visit [COVID-19 Community Fund - Derbyshire County Council](#)

Farm visits

Visiting a farm is an enjoyable and educational experience for many people, particularly children. However, visiting a farm carries a small risk of catching infection from animals or the environment.

Farm animals can be the source of several bugs that can be passed from animals to humans and cause illness. Some can be particularly serious for children or pregnant women.

People can reduce their risk by:

- avoid touching faces or putting fingers in mouths
- don't kiss farm animals or allow children to put their faces close to animals
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching animals, fences or other surfaces
- don't eat or drink while touching animals or walking round the farm and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating or drinking
- remove and clean boots or shoes that might have become soiled and clean pushchair wheels then wash hands thoroughly with soap and water
- don't use gels or wipes instead of washing hands with soap and water
- supervise children closely to make sure they wash their hands thoroughly.

For more information have a look at the [UKHSA blog](#)

Weather Health Alerts

As we move into the summer months and the temperatures start to rise a reminder that everyone can sign up to the [Met Office Weather Health Alerts](#)

[Further advice on how to 'Beat the Heat'](#) can also be found on GOV.UK

There are also a series of [action cards](#) being produced for Health Professionals. They are due to be released on 1st June.

RSPH Encouraging Vaccine Uptake – free training offered

Community project leaders and volunteers who work with members of the public are being offered free accredited training to support improving vaccination levels across Derbyshire in 2024

The fully funded training will be delivered by a professional training company and cover key topics

3 courses are currently planned, and anyone interested can choose between attending an online course or classroom-based training.

The qualification will be a Level 2 Royal Society for Public Health accreditation.

[More information including how to sign up can be found on the DCC webpage](#)

Cervical Screening Awareness Week is 17th – 23rd June 2024

Cervical screening is offered regularly to all women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25-64 and is important in preventing cervical cancer. Screening will usually take place at your GP practice.

[More information on Cervical screening](#) is available on the NHS website.

[For further resources or to get involved in the campaign see the dedicated webpage](#)

All information correct as of. For the latest updates follow the links below

Topic area	Source of information	More information
COVID-19 Spring vaccination campaign	NHS	Book, cancel or change a COVID-19 vaccination appointment
RSPH Encouraging Vaccine Uptake	Derbyshire County Council	RSPH Level 2 Award in Encouraging Vaccination Uptake course
The Covid Community Fund	Derbyshire County Council	COVID-19 Community Fund - Derbyshire County Council
Weather Health Alerts	GOV.UK Met office	Hot weather advice Hot weather and health: action cards Heat-health Alert service
Whooping cough	NHS	Whooping cough Whooping cough vaccination in pregnancy
Cervical Screening Awareness Week	NHS Macmillan.org	Cervical screening – NHS Cervical Screening Awareness Week – Macmillan