

Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team Newsletter



Welcome to the September edition of the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team newsletter.

As we look ahead to the colder months, the [winter vaccination season](#) is now upon us. This is an important time to remind ourselves, our colleagues, patients and communities about the importance of getting protected against flu, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

For everyone who is eligible (full list [here](#)), having your flu vaccination is one of the most important things you can do to help protect yourself against serious illness. But vaccination is about more than individual protection. By getting vaccinated, we can also help reduce the spread of infections and protect those around us who may be more vulnerable. Every vaccination contributes to a healthier, safer Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Public Health Team has been working hard to support this year's vaccination campaign and promote the importance of taking up the offer. We are delighted to share our new 'It Takes a Village' community video on YouTube (link [here](#)), bringing the vaccination message to life through local

This month:

- Former nurse who fell deeply ill with flu urges others to get vaccinated this winter
- More than 1,000 children protected after hepatitis A outbreak in Barry
- First-year university students across south Wales offered MenB vaccine
- Surgeon warns of smoking harms as part of new social media video
- Meet the Nicofiends!
- The Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival returns
- Public Health Team member profile: Anna Howells
- Key health awareness days

voices. A huge thank you to everyone who gave their time to be the faces of the video and help us spread this important message. In this edition, we are also sharing a powerful new case study featuring a former nurse from Barry who became very unwell

after catching flu. Her experience is an important reminder that flu can be much more serious than many people realise. We hope you will help us share these messages across your networks and encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. Together, we can help protect ourselves, our communities and our health services this winter.

Warm regards,
Claire Beynon
Executive Director of Public Health

Former nurse who fell deeply ill with flu urges others to get vaccinated this winter

After more than four decades working in healthcare, including many years as an intensive care nurse, Erika Badenhorst never imagined she would find herself fighting for her own life.

The 67-year-old, from Barry, was visiting London in January when what started as an unexpected chill quickly developed into a severe and life-threatening illness. She was taken to hospital by ambulance, where she was diagnosed with serious respiratory illness, sepsis and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), having also been seriously unwell with flu.

Erika spent weeks in hospital and came close to needing ventilation. Her recovery continued for months, with further hospital visits eventually revealing that she was immunocompromised and had extremely low antibody levels. Her experience has changed her

life, but it has also strengthened her determination to encourage others to protect themselves against flu. Erika has received her flu vaccination every year and firmly believes it played a vital role in her survival.

"I don't think I would be alive today if I hadn't had the flu vaccine," she said.

Her powerful story highlights just how serious flu can be and why vaccination matters, particularly for those at greater risk of complications.

[Read Erika's full story and find out more about her experience and her message to others.](#)

Parents and carers: For information on the school flu vaccine programme, please go to your dedicated page [here](#).

Cardiff and Vale UHB employees: For information on the staff flu vaccine programme, please go to your dedicated page [here](#).

A whole range of flu vaccination posters, messages and information can be found in the Public Health Wales stakeholder communications toolkit [here](#).



More than 1,000 children protected after hepatitis A outbreak in Barry

More than 1,000 young children have received a hepatitis A vaccination as part of the response to the ongoing outbreak in Barry.

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's vaccination team, working in partnership with Public Health Wales, spent almost a month offering the vaccination to children aged one to five years old living in Barry, or receiving childcare in Barry.

Vaccination clinics were held on weekdays and Saturdays at Barry Hospital, and invites were sent out to the

parents and carers of eligible children via text and letter.

The vaccination effort was also publicised in the Welsh media and within local schools and childcare settings.



As a result, hundreds of families across Barry took up the offer, helping to protect their children and reduce the opportunity for hepatitis A to spread within the community.

Sion Lingard, Deputy Director of Public Health at Cardiff and Vale UHB, said: "Reaching 1,000 vaccinations is a fantastic milestone, and we would like to thank every parent and carer who has brought their child along.

"Every vaccination helps. By getting their children vaccinated, families are not only helping to protect them from hepatitis A but are also helping to reduce the chances of the infection spreading to other children, families and the wider Barry community."

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus. Young children can sometimes have few or no symptoms but can still pass the infection to others who may be more vulnerable. Vaccination provides an effective way of protecting children and helping to interrupt transmission within the community.

First-year university students across south Wales offered MenB vaccine

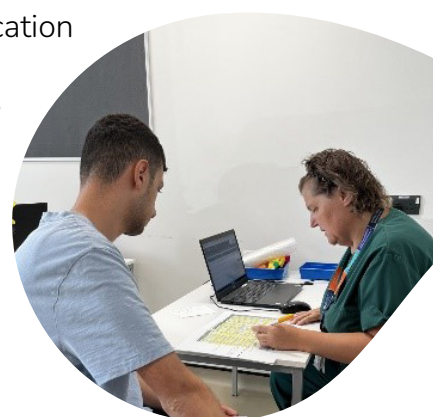
Starting university is an exciting time, but it is also a period when young people may be at increased risk of certain infections. This autumn, students under 25 who are starting their first year of university are being offered a vaccine to help protect against meningitis B (MenB) infection.

The MenB vaccination programme was launched following a serious outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease in Kent earlier this year, which led to more than 20 cases and two tragic deaths.

Students can be at greater risk of MenB because they often meet and socialise in larger numbers and may be living in shared accommodation for the first time. MenB infection can develop quickly and can cause serious, potentially life-threatening illnesses including meningitis and sepsis.

Throughout September and October, Cardiff and Vale UHB's vaccination team will be visiting higher education and residential further education settings to offer the vaccine. Walk-in clinics are also available, with no appointment needed.

The vaccine is given in two doses, four weeks apart, so students are



encouraged to get their first dose as soon as possible.

The programme is available to eligible first-time undergraduate students born on or after 21 July 2001. Students should bring evidence that they are starting their first year, such as an offer letter.

[Find out more about the vaccination clinics and how to get protected.](#)

Surgeon warns of smoking harms as part of new social media video

Consultant thoracic surgeon Tom Combellack sees first-hand the devastating health impacts of smoking. Much of his work involves treating smokers with lung cancer and chronic respiratory conditions.



Smoking-related harm costs the health and care system in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan around £100 million every year, and there are other costs linked to wider societal and environmental impacts too.

In a new video for social media, which was created in conjunction with the Public Health Team and can be viewed [here](#), Tom shares his expert insight on what smoking does to the body, why it's never too late to quit, and the many benefits of giving up.

He said: "I appreciate that giving up smoking is difficult - it's an addictive thing. But there are so many benefits to quitting. In terms of your health, after a few weeks your breathing will start to improve which means you'll be able to do more physical exercise. In the longer-term, quitting reduces your chance of heart disease, strokes, lung cancer and other cancers as well.

"And then there's the financial benefit. Typically, smokers spend on average around £50 per week, so that's £2,500 you can be saving every year."

It's never too late to stop smoking, and quitting is three-time more likely with expert NHS help and support. To access stop smoking support, please visit the [Help Me Quit](#) website: Help Me Quit or call freephone 0800 085 2219.

Meet the Nicofiends

ASH Wales, a leading public health charity dedicated to achieving a smoke-free Wales, has launched [Nicofiends](#). This is a free bilingual campaign helping children and young people across Wales recognise the pressures, feelings, messages and tricks that can influence choices around smoking, vaping and nicotine.

The resource collection includes activities for primary schools, secondary schools and youth groups, discussion resources, creative challenges, quick games and the brand-new Nicofiends card game.

Young people can take part in the Create a Nicofiend national competition too, creating their own character based on a pressure, feeling, message or trick linked to smoking, vaping or nicotine.



Twelve winning ideas will be professionally brought to life and become official Nicofiends in the 2027 campaign. Entries close December 4, 2026.

Find the free resources and competition information [here](#). For more information, partnership enquiries or support using Nicofiends, contact adele@ashwales.org.uk.

Huw Brunt, Consultant in Public Health who leads on tobacco for the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team, added: “The Public Health Team works very closely with ASH Wales and other partners to reduce the uptake and prevalence of smoking and nicotine addiction in children and young people. To achieve this, we have created an action plan ([here](#)) which outlines our shared commitments.

“We’re delighted to share ASH Wales’ new campaign and hope it’ll be a key tool in highlighting the harms of tobacco smoking to young people across the country.”

The Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival returns

The Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival returns from September 12 to October 31.

Community groups, schools, gardens and businesses will run a wide range of events centred around cooking, sharing and growing good food. The full programme is now live [here](#).

Food Cardiff has provided grants to schools and community groups to run events as part of the Autumn Festival programme.

Food Cardiff is a city-wide ‘food partnership’ of individuals and organisations. It acts as a hub for connecting the people and projects working to promote healthy, environmentally sustainable and ethical food across the city.

The Good Food Autumn Festival launched at Amgueddfa Cymru Food Festival at St Fagans National Museum of History on the weekend of September 12-13.

All of the events also support Food Cardiff’s five food goals - a healthy Cardiff, an environmentally sustainable Cardiff, a thriving local economy, a fair and connected food system, and an empowering food movement.



Team member profile

Anna Howells, Consultant in Public Health

Anna was appointed as a Consultant in Public Health in June 2026 and leads on the immunisations and public health research portfolios, in addition to leading on the Population Needs Assessment for the Regional Partnership Board (RPB).



Anna undertook her public health training in Wales, moving to Cardiff in 2019. She has worked for a range of organisations in Wales since then, including Public Health Wales, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and a project with Welsh Government. She completed a Master's in Public Health at Cardiff University in 2020.

She was selected as a UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Clinical Fellow in 2022, spending a year working on a COVID-19 cohort study of healthcare workers in the UK (the SIREN study).

Prior to public health training, Anna worked in health, both in the UK and internationally, working for public and third sector organisations. This included undertaking an NHS global health fellowship in Myanmar which focused on diabetes.

Outside of work, Anna enjoys hiking, cycling and netball.

Key Health Awareness Days

- September 21 – 25: [National Falls Awareness Week](#)
- September 21 – 27: [Occupational Health Awareness Week](#)
- September 29: [World Heart Day](#)
- October 1 – 31: [Sober October](#)
- October 1 – 31: [National Cholesterol Month](#)
- October 1 – 31: [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- October 5 – 9: [National Work Life Week](#)
- October 10: [World Mental Health Day](#)
- October 18: [Menopause Awareness Day](#)