

Adult and Communities Scrutiny Committee:

Follow Up Issues (Public Health)

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Typically, pertussis has a 'peak' year every 3-5 years. The last 'peak' year was in 2016, so we were 'overdue' for one. Case numbers this year have been much higher than in a typical 'peak' year, so it may be that we are effectively seeing two peaks superimposed on one another.

The diagnosis of whooping cough is generally made on the basis of symptoms rather than a microbiological test, which means that there can be variation in when people consider whooping cough to be the most likely diagnosis as compared with other illnesses that can cause a long-term cough.

As the infectious period is towards the start of the cough, this means that vaccination is the best way to prevent spread - as the diagnosis is not usually made until after the infectious period has passed.

This also means that doctors are more likely to diagnose and report cases when they are aware that pertussis is circulating, as it makes the diagnosis more likely.

Data

From national data sources (this is publicly available, published data): in England and Wales, over the last twelve months, 21,872 cases have been reported; this compares with 759 for the preceding twelve months.

From local data sources (note that this unvalidated local data may not match nationally reported data):

- In the North East, over the last twelve months, over 1,500 cases have been reported; this compares with less than 60 for the preceding twelve months.
- In Redcar & Cleveland, over the last twelve months, 20 cases have been reported; this compares with none for the preceding twelve months.
- In Middlesbrough, over the last twelve months, 45 cases have been reported; this compares with one for the preceding twelve months.

Vaccination is important because young children (0-8 weeks) not old enough to be vaccinated against pertussis themselves are at high risk of being severely unwell and in the worst case dying if they become infected, hence why PH South Tees have been promoting the maternal pertussis vaccine.

PH South Tees have been working with South Tees Maternity Department, and this has been picked up by the ICB who have developed our local materials for flu, covid, and pertussis into a regional campaign with fliers and videos featuring pregnant local women.

We have the vaccination uptake rate data for GPs across South Tees.

- For 2022/23 Redcar & Cleveland was 59% (517/1,270). For comparison Middlesbrough GPs uptake was 50% (753/1,502)

- For 2023/24 uptake has dropped to 44% (435/990) in Redcar & Cleveland (39% in Middlesbrough (555/1,431))

Youth Vaping

Youth vaping substances continues to be an issue although a few schools have reported pupils vaping, regular vapes seems to have been decreasing.

We have sent several letters to schools outlining the risks of vaping substances and local services have seen a steady increase in young people accessing their services and have had open doors into schools to work with year groups.

We have developed a real time reporting mechanism (RTRM) so that schools can report incidents of age restricted products, illegal substance use and teenage pregnancy, this is in final testing phase on Firmstep and will be launched in September when schools return.

Trading Standards have just had the drug dog into 3 secondary schools along with a vape amnesty box – it went well but we don't have figures of vapes handed in.

We don't have the resource to influence the PHSE curriculum for all secondary schools to ensure that schools are covering the correct (emerging) topics and giving out the correct information and signposts to services. However we have developed a booklet to go to schools alongside the RTRM that details such services.

Data

PH South Tees have met with A&E on several occasions to promote the recording of incidents where young people and substances have attended. We have had no data to date, but have developed the RTRM so that A&E can report through it.

Nationally there were 50 admissions (not A&E attendances, an inpatient admission) for vaping related disorders in children in 2023, up from 6 in 2020. There is very limited data on A&E attendances.

Thrive Partnership Young Person's Team

- Delivered sessions on substance misuse and vaping in primary and secondary schools; delivering to over 4,000 pupils in the last year.
- Thrive Partnership also run drop-in sessions at local schools and Pupil Referral Units and have classroom/teaching workshops on a regular basis, working in small groups.
- Within these sessions, we deliver alongside our THRIVE partners and offer a range of resources alongside our usual substance misuse delivery; including relationships, domestic abuse, and exploitation
- Delivered 1-to-1 psychosocial interventions to support quitting substance misuse (not just vaping – cannabis is the biggest issue) to young people (defined as under 25 so includes beyond school age) with 101 engaging into tier 3 support – the highest level of intervention.

Either (or both!) of these areas can be covered in more depth in a Scrutiny session if required.