

# Public Health Bulletin

## March 2026



### Public Health Reports Digest

March 2026

Welcome to the latest Public Health Reports Digest compiled by NHS Fife Library & Knowledge Service which highlights recent publications and journal articles which we hope you find of interest.

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#### ***In the Media, Recent Reports, and From the Journals***

Items from the media, recently published reports and articles from the journals are listed alphabetically in topic order.

Alcohol	Environment	Obesity & Healthy Eating	Sexual Health
Cancer	Health & Social care	Older People	Smoking
Children & Young People	Health Inequalities	Pharmacy	Suicide & Self Harm
Covid -19	Health Protection	Physical Activity	Woman & Infant Health
Dental Health	Medical Conditions	Population Statistics	
Drugs	Mental Wellbeing	Public Health	

## Public Health Bulletin – March 2026

### Alcohol

#### **No and low alcohol drinks may encourage teens to start drinking, researchers warn**

BMJ, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

“In January 2026, the UK government was reportedly considering a ban on sales of no and low alcohol (“nolo”) drinks to consumers under the age of 18.1 The media reports sparked heated debate about whether there’s any real harm in consuming the beverages, which legally can contain no more than 0.5% alcohol.”

#### **National drug and alcohol treatment waiting times, 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025**

Public Health Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

“10,863 referrals were made to community-based specialist drug and alcohol treatment services, a decrease of 10.9% from the previous quarter (12,195). Lower numbers of referrals in each quarter ending December reflect reduced service availability during the festive period.”

## Cancer

### **From rhetoric to reality: what is the neighbourhood health service?**

MacMillan Cancer Support, 2026

“In this piece, we hope to provide insight into the ongoing development of neighbourhood health and to share important enablers that can support the implementation of the neighbourhood health vision.”

### **Cancer survival statistics Cancers diagnosed 2018 to 2022, followed up to 2023**

Public Health Scotland, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides information on cancer survival in Scotland for individuals (aged 15-99) diagnosed during the period 2018 to 2022, with follow-up of individual vital status (if a person is alive or dead) to 31 December 2023.”

## Children & Young People

### **Early childhood social and emotional development**

Public Health Scotland, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The purpose of this paper is to examine the available evidence from systematic reviews and longitudinal studies about the possible effect of elements of home and neighbourhood environments on children’s social, emotional and behavioural development before the age of 8 years.”

### **Why are a growing number of young people who are NEET reporting work-limiting health conditions?**

The Health Foundation, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Among young people who are NEET, the share reporting a work-limiting health condition has increased steadily over the past decade, reaching 44% in 2025 (up from 26% in 2015). This reflects a wider trend among 16–24-year-olds.”

### **UK paternity leave, limited and unequal**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Self-employed fathers lose out most from an inadequate UK paternity leave offer.”

### **Scotland becomes first in UK to test newborns for rare genetic condition**

BBC News, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

“Scotland has become the first part of the UK to test newborn babies for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). The rare genetic condition causes progressive muscle weakness and, without treatment, can limit life expectancy to just two years.”

### **New consultation to help children to enjoy healthier diets**

GOV.UK, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The government has opened a public consultation on applying the new nutrient profiling model to advertising and promotions restrictions.”

### **How improved data affects the Scottish child poverty reduction targets**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The Department of Work and Pensions has improved the income data we use to measure poverty in the UK, which affects the Scottish Parliament’s child poverty reduction targets, and what you can say about child poverty in Scotland.”

## Environment

### **Effective road safety interventions for public health: an umbrella review**

Public Health Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

“Motor vehicle traffic is a cause of road traffic injuries and wider population health concerns in Scotland, such as air pollution, noise and physical inactivity. This umbrella review presents a conceptual framework of the application of a public health prevention approach to road safety.”

## Dental Health

### **WHO calls for a global shift to environmentally friendly, less invasive and affordable oral health care**

WHO, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

“The guideline presents a comprehensive package of safe, effective and mercury-free clinical interventions, reflecting the latest scientific evidence on prevention, non-invasive care and minimally invasive management of dental caries.”

## **NHS dentistry is rotting. Will the plan to fix it work?**

BBC News, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## Drugs

### **Estimated prevalence of opioid dependence in Scotland 2014/15 to 2023/24**

Public Health Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

“This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) presents estimates of the number of people aged 15 to 69 years old with opioid dependence, along with estimates of the prevalence of this group among Scotland’s general population. These statistics are published annually, providing updated estimates for each financial year.”

### **National drug and alcohol treatment waiting times, 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025**

Public Health Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

“10,863 referrals were made to community-based specialist drug and alcohol treatment services, a decrease of 10.9% from the previous quarter (12,195). Lower numbers of referrals in each quarter ending December reflect reduced service availability during the festive period.”

## Health & Social Care

### **Unpaid care: the realities of caring in the UK**

The Health Foundation, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

“Unpaid carers play a vital role in society, supporting friends and family because of illness, disability, mental health problems or addiction. Caring is often rewarding but without the right support, it can come at a personal and financial cost.”

### **Short stay urgent care data group recommendations**

Public Health Scotland, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

“This report provides recommendations and actions for Public Health Scotland (PHS) and NHS boards to improve consistent recording practices and clearer reporting for short stay urgent care facilities. These recommendations and proposed actions were approved by the Short Stay Urgent Care (SSUC) Data Short Life Working Group (SLWG) in December 2025.”

### **The future of patient voice: learning from the Healthwatch model**

King’s Fund, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This research explores what can be learned from the Healthwatch model, including what has worked well, what the challenges have been and how this can inform the government’s planned changes to how patient and service user experiences are collected and used.”

## **Health Inequalities**

### **UK paternity leave, limited and unequal**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Self-employed fathers lose out most from an inadequate UK paternity leave offer.”

### **Long-term monitoring of health inequalities in Scotland by area deprivation**

Public Health Scotland, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Responsibility for long-term monitoring of health inequalities in Scotland by area deprivation reporting has moved from the Scottish Government to Public Health Scotland. The last Scottish Government report was published in 2023 and included data to 2021.”

### **Exploring Scottish attitudes towards health inequality**

The Health Foundation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“For years, the Scottish government has discussed the importance of policies to prevent poor health outcomes. In 2011, the Christie Commission brought to light the need for preventative action to address the rising demand for and cost of public services. Last year’s Population Health Framework reaffirmed Scotland’s commitment for preventative action to reduce health inequalities.”

### **How improved data affects the Scottish child poverty reduction targets**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The Department of Work and Pensions has improved the income data we use to measure poverty in the UK, which affects the Scottish Parliament’s child poverty reduction targets, and what you can say about child poverty in Scotland.”

## **Health Protection**

### **HPV Awareness Day: Making protection equal for everyone**

Public Health Scotland, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“In our latest blog, we’re shining a spotlight on HPV Awareness Day and the importance of protecting everyone from HPV-related diseases. With insights from the Throat Cancer Foundation, we explore what HPV is, why prevention matters and what more can be done to ensure equal access to life-saving vaccination and screening.”

### **Meningococcal disease in Kent**

Public Health Scotland, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is continuing to investigate an outbreak of meningococcal disease in Kent and a rolling news story is being regularly updated on their website: [Cases of invasive meningococcal disease notified in Kent - GOV.UK](#)

## Medical Conditions

### **Laser printed hydrogel implant could transform bone repair**

Science Daily, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

“Researchers at ETH Zurich have created a jelly-like hydrogel that mimics the body’s natural healing process, offering a potentially game-changing alternative. Made of 97% water, this soft material can be laser-printed into intricate bone-like structures at record-breaking speeds, down to details thinner than a human hair.”

### **New cholesterol guidelines could change when you get tested**

Science Daily, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“A new, more advanced risk calculator now uses broader health data to better predict heart attack and stroke risk over decades.”

## Mental Wellbeing

### **Links between parental mental health, child mental health and school outcomes, England: 2021 to 2022**

Office for National Statistics, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The insights include the difference in the impact of the mental health of mothers compared with fathers, which is a unique element of the analysis. They also include the effect of child mental ill-health on their academic attainment, both directly and indirectly, via school absences.”

## Obesity & Healthy Eating

### **Taking action together - improving diet and healthy weight across Scotland**

Public Health Scotland, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This year, World Obesity Day highlights that obesity is a global issue, exploring the scale of the challenge and the opportunities to create healthier, fairer systems for everyone. Claire Hislop, Organisational Lead, Food and Physical Activity, reflects on our recent Improving Diet and Healthy Weight conference and the power of partnership it demonstrated.”

### **New consultation to help children to enjoy healthier diets**

GOV.UK, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“The government has opened a public consultation on applying the new nutrient profiling model to advertising and promotions restrictions.”

### **Outcomes of referrals to Weight Management and Type 2 Diabetes Prevention and Remission Services , 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2025**

Public Health Scotland, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

“Around a third (34%) of all referrals had started weight management interventions, however this varied across different pathways.”

## Older People

### **Vaccines from age 65 and beyond: What to expect and when**

Public Health Scotland, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Because vaccinations are offered at different ages, some are one-off and others annual, it can understandably feel confusing. The table below breaks down which vaccines are currently offered and when - giving you a clear, simple overview so you know exactly what to expect.”

## Pharmacy

### **Understanding patient experiences of buying medicines online**

The Patient’s Association, 11<sup>th</sup> march 2026

“This report presents the findings of a project delivered by the Patients Association and sponsored by Lilly UK to better understand the experience of patients when purchasing medicines from unregulated online sources, including website and social media.”

## Physical Activity

N/A

## Population Statistics

### **Scottish Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) screening programme statistics: Year ending 31 March 2025**

Public Health Scotland, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an annual update on the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) screening programme in Scotland. This programme aims to reduce the number of deaths caused by abdominal aneurysms in men aged 65 and over.”

### **Cancer survival statistics Cancers diagnosed 2018 to 2022, followed up to 2023**

Public Health Scotland, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides information on cancer survival in Scotland for individuals (aged 15-99) diagnosed during the period 2018 to 2022, with follow-up of individual vital status (if a person is alive or dead) to 31 December 2023.”

## Public Health

### **Socioeconomic disadvantage and self-reported health**

The Health Foundation, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“This analysis, underpinned by modelling from the Office for National Statistics, is the largest study of its kind to show the links between self-reported health and socioeconomic deprivation over time (between 2011 and 2021).”

### **Update on meningitis**

Public Health Scotland, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Public Health Scotland (PHS) is working closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), other public health colleagues across the UK and NHS Boards in Scotland, to monitor the outbreak of meningitis in Kent.”

## Sexual Health

N/A

## Smoking

### **The smoking ban has shown that meaningful change is possible**

Public Health Scotland, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“A new report, published today by PHS, shows the positive impact this decisive measure has had on non-smokers too. The legislation protected most people in Scotland from breathing in cigarette smoke during their daily lives and the public health gains are clear.”

## Suicide & Self Harm

N/A

## Women's & Infant Health

### **Menopause and mental health: Position Statement PS02/26, March 2026**

RCPSYCH, March 2026

“Drawing on lived experience, clinical evidence and an intersectional approach, it highlights that menopause can significantly impact mental health and wellbeing, and is associated with anxiety, depression, cognitive changes and, sometimes, triggering or worsening serious mental illness.”

### **500,000 eligible to benefit from new non-hormonal treatment for hot flushes caused by menopause**

NICE, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“A new treatment option for menopausal hot flushes and night sweats can be used in the NHS when hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is not suitable.”

### **UK paternity leave, limited and unequal**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026

“Self-employed fathers lose out most from an inadequate UK paternity leave offer.”

### **THE STATE OF ENDOMETRIOSIS CARE IN THE UK: A ROADMAP FOR DRIVING DOWN DIAGNOSIS TIMES AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO CARE**

Endometriosis UK

“This report is based on an online survey undertaken by Endometriosis UK in September – October 2025. We used the data from 3,075 respondents who had received a diagnosis of endometriosis from a healthcare practitioner in the UK since 2015; over 50% had received a diagnosis since 2023.”