

News story: UK flu levels continue to increase according to PHE statistics

The latest Public Health England (PHE) statistics published at 14.00 today show that seasonal flu levels have continued to increase in the last week across the UK.

The statistics show over the last week there has been a 78% increase in the GP consultation rate with flu like illness, a 50% increase in the flu hospitalisation rate, and a 65% increase in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2), A(H1N1) and Flu B.

PHE and the Department for Health this morning launched the 'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It' campaign. The campaign includes radio, press and digital advertising to inform the public about the steps they can take to protect themselves and reduce spread of the virus by practising good respiratory hand hygiene. Dr Paul Cosford, Medical Director of PHE, Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director of NHS England and the Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies have also written to all frontline healthcare workers to encourage them to take up the offer of the vaccine if they haven't already.

The flu virus can live for many hours on hard surfaces and therefore practising good hand hygiene can limit the spread of germs and transmission of flu. People are advised to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue, bin it, and then wash their hands afterwards to kill the germs. Practising good hand hygiene and giving eligible people the flu vaccine is the best defence against the virus.

Professor Paul Cosford, Medical Director, Public Health England said:

Our data shows that more people are visiting GPs with flu symptoms and we are seeing more people admitted to hospital with flu.

We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia. The A(H3N2) strain particularly affects older, more vulnerable age groups.

We encourage anyone who is eligible to take up their offer of the flu vaccine – it is not too late. People suffering with flu-like symptoms should catch coughs or sneezes in tissues and bin them immediately, wash their hands regularly with soap and warm water and frequently clean regularly used surfaces to stop the spread of flu. Avoid having unnecessary contact with other people if you or they have symptoms of flu.

Seasonal flu usually circulates for several weeks each year. The intensity of

circulation depends upon the underlying population immunity, the circulating viruses and external factors such as the weather. It is an unpredictable virus and it is not possible to anticipate how flu levels will progress.

Amongst other diseases like norovirus that normally increase during winter, seasonal flu puts extra pressure on the NHS every year.

The [latest data](#) is available online. Currently, 71.3% of adults over 65, 46.9% of adults with a long-term health condition, 45.5% of pregnant women, 40.8% of 3-year-olds and 42% of 2-year-olds have received the vaccine.

Press release: UKEF extends support for UK exports to over 60 currencies

Overseas buyers of UK exports can now access UK government-backed finance in 62 pre-approved local currencies, Minister for Investment Graham Stuart MP announced today.

The support is available through UK Export Finance (UKEF), the UK's export credit agency, and will help UK exporters compete for major overseas contracts, by allowing overseas buyers to access long-term finance in their local currency when they buy from the UK.

Graham Stuart MP said:

By giving UK exporters the flexibility to offer government-backed finance to their international customers in the currency of their choice, we are increasing the appeal of sourcing from the UK.

This world-leading offer from UK Export Finance gives buyers all over the world – from Bulgaria to Vietnam – the ability to 'buy British, pay local.

The announcement builds on the expansion of UKEF's local currency offering to 43 currencies in the Autumn Statement 2016, compared to fewer than 15 available in 2010.

Being able to access long-term finance is particularly beneficial for overseas buyers whose revenue and accounts are in their local currency, thereby helping to increase the competitiveness of a UK exporter's offering.

UKEF can now offer pre-approved local currency financing in:

- Bulgarian Lev
- Colombian Peso*
- Croatian Kuna*
- Dominican Peso*
- Ghanaian Cedi*
- Jordanian Dinar*
- Kazakhstani Tenge*
- Mongolian Togrog*
- Moroccan Dirham*
- Nigerian Naira
- Pakistani Rupee*
- Panamanian Balboa
- Philippine Peso
- Romanian Leu
- Serbian Dinar*
- Sri Lankan Rupee*
- New Taiwan Dollar
- Trinidad & Tobago Dollar
- Vietnamese Dong

*Support will be approved on a case-by-case basis

Image credit: UK Parliament/[CC 3.0](#)

Press release: Green light for Hull's £42m Humber flood scheme

The Humber Hull Frontages will improve flood protection to 113,000 properties in Hull.

Funding has been secured for a £42 million upgrade to the tidal flood defence scheme in the Humber Estuary – improving flood protection to 113,000 properties.

Led by the Environment Agency, the Humber Hull Frontages scheme will present an opportunity to review and improve a 19 kilometres stretch of tidal flood defences in the Humber Estuary to better protect homes and businesses that are at risk of flooding in Hull.

Floods Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

This state of the art scheme is great news for homeowners and businesses along the Humber Estuary, especially for the city of Hull, as we both upgrade existing defences and add new defences

extending protection.

It is a key part of our £430m flood defence investment programme for Yorkshire, better protecting thousands of homes and helping businesses to grow, thrive and create new opportunities – supporting the Government's work on the Northern Powerhouse.

Proposed improvements in Hull will be supported by a further 4 kilometres of new and raised tidal defences on either side of the city in the East Riding of Yorkshire, at Hessle and Paull, delivered by East Riding of Yorkshire Council in partnership with the Environment Agency.

Helen Tattersdale, project manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Hull has a long history of being flooded from the Humber Estuary. This was seen most recently in December 2013 when a tidal surge flooded more than 260 properties when the city's defences were overtopped.

By raising the existing defence walls and embankments, we are able to plan for the effects of climate change and bring them to the level needed to better protect the city from tidal flooding in future years.

Contractor BMM JV – a joint venture between BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald – has been appointed to develop a detailed design and build plan along Hull's 19 kilometre waterfront. This work follows the review of existing flood defences along the banks of the Humber Estuary in Hull conducted by built environment consultants at Arup.

Donald Daly, project manager for Arup said:

Coastal Flooding is one of the most serious threats facing the UK. That's why it is so important that Hull, the country's largest at-risk urban area outside of London, has received government approval for additional tidal flood defences.

Using a range of technologies to collect and make sense of vast amounts of data, we've developed plans that will improve defences to account for anticipated changing weather patterns and sea level rises over the next 100 years.

BAM Nuttall Mott MacDonald Joint Venture is looking forward to delivering the flood alleviation project as part of its Water and Environmental Management Framework. Over the next few months, BMM JV and the Environment Agency will consult with landowners, businesses and local residents on key elements of their proposed designs.

Allan Rogers, BAM Nuttall National Framework Director said:

We are delighted to be involved with another significant flood alleviation scheme for the Environment Agency. It's a scheme that will deliver outcome measures that will lessen the flood risk to business and homes. We are committed to delivering the scheme efficiently and with stakeholder issues in mind

The Humber Hull Frontages scheme is one of a number of tidal flood alleviation projects that form part of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Environment Agency and local partners are now in the process of developing an advanced approach to managing flooding in tidal areas by the Humber for the next 100 years.

Subject to planning approval, work on the Humber Hull Frontages scheme will start next summer and will be complete by 2020.

It will be a long-term investment that will contribute to securing the viability of Hull and the wider Humber region, ensuring it retains its place as the eastern gateway to the UK economy.

[News story: DBS basic checks – coming soon](#)

From 17 January if you need a basic check for a job in England and Wales, you should apply to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). If you need a basic check for a job in Scotland, then you should apply to [Disclosure Scotland](#).

If you want a check for personal reasons rather than work purposes, you should apply to the relevant organisation for your area – DBS if you live in England or Wales or Disclosure Scotland if you live in Scotland.

If you are an individual applying for your own basic check you will be able to use our new online application route.

If you are an organisation applying for a basic check on behalf of an employee or someone else, you can use a 'Responsible Organisation' (RO) – a third party registered with DBS . A list of Responsible Organisations can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/responsible-organisations>. Please note that a basic check from DBS costs £25 but some ROs will add their own fees to this cost. This amount varies depending on the service they offer.

It is important that you apply to the right organisation for your basic check, so that the correct Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) rules are applied. There is a risk of legal action if incorrect ROA rules are applied

and impact a recruitment decision.

If you have any questions, please contact customerservices@dbi.gsi.gov.uk.

News story: Watch out for 'Payment Diversion Fraud' – keep your school funds safe

The purpose of this alert is to provide knowledge and prevention advice to independent schools and parents of students, in order to prevent them from falling victim to payment diversion fraud – a fraud that involves falsely creating or diverting payments. Information is based on reports made during the past month to Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud reporting centre.

What to look out for

Fraudsters are placing themselves in the middle of transactions between parents and schools. The fraudster contacts the parents outlining details and payment instructions for the latest school fees. Initial contact appears to primarily be made via email and often from the school's own compromised email system.

However, the National Fraud Investigation Bureau (NFIB) has also seen instances where the email address used is similar to that of the school, for example using 'nn' instead of an 'm'.

The victim then makes the required payment into the bank account, which is in the control of the fraudster. By the time the fraud has been identified, the funds have already disappeared.

In several instances there has been a strong element of manipulation to the scam, with fraudsters building trust with victims through contact by phone, email or other direct messaging. Often, the fraudulent email promises a discount for early fee payments.

Schools

- ensure all administration staff are aware of this fraud
- ensure staff are aware of cyber-protection protocols and understand NOT to open links or attachments from unexpected or suspicious emails. Doing so may compromise the school's email system

- review password protocols and ensure those that are used are strong, as long as possible and contain a combination of letters as well as numbers and symbols
- review internal policies and procedures for managing fee payments and ensure these are communicated clearly to parents
- consider using a 'payment gateway' for the receipt of funds from parents
- ensure computer systems are secure and that antivirus software is up to date
- to help combat 'typo squatting', consider registering similar domain names

Parents

- always verify an email payment change request directly with the school, via the official, established contact details you have on file. Be alert to unexpected or notably increased fee requests
- be vigilant and always scrutinise requests to amend payment procedures. Check for inconsistencies and grammatical errors in external emails, such as a misspelt school name or a slightly different email address; these can be warning signs of fraud
- don't be afraid to question and to verify details if being asked to make fee payments into a new bank account

If you or your school have fallen victim to payment diversion fraud, you should report it to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2040, or visiting the [Action Fraud website](#).

If you are a charity, you should also report this to the Charity Commission as a serious incident, using the dedicated reporting facility: rsi@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Serious incident reporting helps the Commission to assess the volume and impact of incidents within charities and to understand the risks facing the sector as a whole; where appropriate, the Commission can also provide timely advice and guidance to a charity.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

We are urging all charitable schools and parents to be alert to this. If they suspect they've fallen victim to payment diversion fraud, they should report this immediately to Action Fraud, and to the Commission, under its serious incident reporting regime.

By working together we will ensure these fraudsters do not prey on charities, parents and pupils in this way. Such scams not only divert precious funds away from the pupils and schools that need them, but harm public trust and confidence in the charity and education sectors more widely.

Julie Robinson, General Secretary of The Independent Schools Council, added:

Schools and fee-paying parents have been targeted by fraudsters posing as school accounts departments seeking alternative payment arrangements. We are supporting the Charity Commission in raising awareness among schools and parents, and we urge institutions to alert their stakeholders to this unlawful activity.

Ends.