

Public Health Bulletin

March 2026



Public Health Reports Digest

April 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.

This Current Awareness Bulletin (CAB) is part of a national programme of bulletins produced in partnership by NHS boards across Scotland. Every attempt has been made to include and acknowledge the author and publisher within all links. The information contained in these bulletins is for educational purposes only. We have endeavoured to ensure the information is up to date and correct and that creator and publisher information is given where relevant.

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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	

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Alcohol

N/A

Cancer

Lung cancer quality performance indicator (QPI) documentation, 1 January 2026 onwards

Public Health Scotland, 16th April 2026

“PHS has an important role in developing national prospective audit data sets and data definitions in collaboration with Scotland's three regional cancer networks and the tumour specific QPI development groups.”

Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy activity

Public Health Scotland, 23rd April 2026

“This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) reports on systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT) activity across NHS services in Scotland. Treatment activity includes the weekly number of appointments and the monthly and annual number of appointments and patients receiving treatment.”

11 cancers on the rise in young people - scientists find first clue why it's happening

BBC News, 29th April 2026

“Eleven cancers are becoming more common in young people in England, a major analysis shows. A full explanation for why levels of cancer are increasing remains elusive. But the study reveals that a decades-long pattern of people becoming more overweight is likely to play some role, even though it is far from the whole story.”

Children & Young People

Supporting young people to transition into adolescent and adult services

NHS England, 8th April 2026

“This guidance supports services to provide developmentally appropriate care for 0 to 25-year-olds. It sets out proposed actions for integrated care boards (ICBs), providers and clinical teams to enable safe and effective transition between services.”

Screen use by children aged under 5

Gov.UK, 27th March 2026

“The findings and recommendations of the Early Years Screen Time Advisory Group on the effects of all types of screen use in the early years of childhood.”

Early child development, Scotland 2024 to 2025

Public Health Scotland, 28th April 2026

“This annual release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an update on children’s development as assessed during the 13-15 month, 27-30 month, and 4-5 year child health reviews. The latest information presented comes from reviews provided to children becoming eligible for review between April 2024 and March 2025.”

Social media: Ministers vow to bring in “some form” of restrictions on under 16s using online platforms

BMJ, 28th April 2026

“Under 16s will be restricted from accessing social media, ministers have promised, and a ban on the use of smartphones in schools in England is also likely. Education minister Olivia Bailey made the commitments as part of compromise to get the House of Lords to support the government’s Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill.”

Environment

Step into spring: Stay well while enjoying the outdoors

Public Health Scotland, 1st April 2026

“As spring arrives, Scotland’s landscapes begin to burst back into life. Longer days, milder temperatures and brighter skies make this a perfect time to head outdoors - something we know can do wonders for both our mental and physical wellbeing.”

Dental Health

N/A

Drugs

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

Public Health Scotland, 31st 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”

Health & Social Care

Public satisfaction with the NHS and social care in 2025 (BSA)

King’s Fund, 25th March 2026

“In 2025, 26% of British adults were satisfied with how the NHS runs – a statistically significant 6 percentage point increase from 2024, and the first increase in satisfaction since 2019. 2025 also saw the largest fall in dissatisfaction in 25 years, falling from 59% in 2024 to 51%.”

Health Inequalities

Scotland’s health can’t wait: why prevention must be at the heart of the next parliament

The Health Foundation, 17th April 2026

“In the most deprived areas of Scotland, people can expect to live over 25 years fewer in good health than those in the least deprived. These outcomes are not inevitable – they reflect long-standing structural inequalities, exposed and intensified by recent crises.”

Action needed now for economically insecure disabled people in Scotland

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 17th April 2026

“Our latest poll finds that disabled people are at greater risk of feeling economically insecure and are disproportionately represented among those facing the greatest financial strain.”

Health Protection

Pregnancy vaccine reduces baby hospital admissions for RSV by 80%

BBC News, 18th April 2026

“A vaccine during pregnancy which protects newborns against nasty chest infections is cutting hospital admissions of babies by more than 80%, UK health officials say.”

Medical Conditions

Beyond BMI: Removing Harmful Barriers to Joint Replacement Surgery

Arthritis UK, March 2026

“‘Beyond BMI: Removing Harmful Barriers to Joint Replacement Surgery’ sets out the evidence and impact of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in England using body mass index (BMI) thresholds as a way of rationing joint replacement surgery.”

Injection for more than a million people to help prevent heart attacks and strokes recommended

NICE, 1st April 2026

“People who have had a heart attack, stroke, or serious circulation problem in their legs, and who also carry excess weight, can now be offered a weekly injection to help protect them from a further life-threatening event, NICE has said.”

Mental Wellbeing

Shifting power

Centre for Mental Health, March 2026

“The report finds that community organisations are essential to preventing mental ill health and providing culturally competent care. As well as the adoption of anti-racist approaches in public health services, the report calls for a shift power to communities, including by funding third sector organisations to lead community-based support.”

Preparing for the Mental Health Act 2025

SCIE, March 2026

“This report provides insights from the sector following a set of advisory groups led by SCIE, highlighting the immediate reactions, concerns and what support organisations will require to meaningfully implement the changes.”

Mental health quality indicator profile

Public Health Scotland, 28th April 2026

“This quarterly release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) presents information on mental health quality indicators in support of the Mental health and wellbeing strategy 2023 and Core Mental Health Standards.”

Obesity & Healthy Eating

N/A

Older People

N/A

Pharmacy

Independent prescribing in the UK: Workforce ambitions and implementation challenges

Nuffield Trust, 9th April 2026

“Health professionals such as nurses, pharmacists and AHPs who can prescribe medicines, known as independent prescribers, are a critical and growing part of the NHS workforce and key to shifting care into the community. However, our report finds current arrangements fall short, with limited planning, inconsistent access to training and supervision, and gaps in regulation, oversight and data.”

Physical Activity

N/A

Population Statistics

Scottish bowel screening programme statistics, For the period of invitations from May 2023 to April 2025

Public Health Scotland, 7th April 2026

“This report by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an annual update to key performance indicators for the Scottish Bowel Screening Programme. The report includes uptake, laboratory and clinical outcomes of screened individuals, for those invited from May 2023 to April 2025.”

Public Health

Scotland's health can't wait: why prevention must be at the heart of the next parliament

The Health Foundation, 17th April 2026

“In the most deprived areas of Scotland, people can expect to live over 25 years fewer in good health than those in the least deprived. These outcomes are not inevitable – they reflect long-standing structural inequalities, exposed and intensified by recent crises.”

Sexual Health

N/A

Smoking

Huge variation in NHS stop smoking funding leaves high need areas underresourced

BMJ, 17th April 2026

“An analysis by the charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH),¹ shared exclusively with The BMJ, shows huge variation in spending per smoker in integrated care boards, which commission and fund smoking cessation services.”

Smoking ban for people born after 2008 in the UK agreed

BBC News, 21st April 2026

“Both the Commons and Lords have settled on a final draft of the "landmark" legislation, external that aims to stop anyone born after 1 January 2009 from taking up smoking by making it illegal for shops to sell them tobacco, to create a smoke-free generation.”

Suicide & Self Harm

N/A

Women's & Infant Health

You're pregnant! Scans and tests

Public Health Scotland, 16th April 2026

“This booklet explains the screening and diagnostic tests you can have in pregnancy. Screening in pregnancy involves simple tests that help to find out the chances of you or your baby having a health or chromosomal condition, so you and your baby can have treatment early if needed.”

Pregnancy vaccine reduces baby hospital admissions for RSV by 80%

BBC News, 18th April 2026

“A vaccine during pregnancy which protects newborns against nasty chest infections is cutting hospital admissions of babies by more than 80%, UK health officials say.”

Early care scheme could prevent thousands of miscarriages a year

BBC News, 29th April 2026

“The new model started after just one miscarriage, and gave the women progressively more care after each baby loss. Researchers say it found a small reduction in the miscarriage rate among its test group. Where women did go on to have more miscarriages, researchers say they received better care and support.”

