

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Slough Health and Well-being Board
Date:	16 th September 2025
Subject:	Health Protection Update
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield, Director of Public Health and Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Sarah Rayfield, Consultant in Public Health
Ward(s):	ALL
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix A: Emergency Planning and Resilience Structure (Thames Valley and Berkshire East).

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out an overview of key health protection issues presenting a risk to or affecting Slough and current work in place.

Please indicate which priority in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, [Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025](#), your report links to:

Priority 1 – Starting Well	Priority 2 - Integration	Priority 3 – Strong, Health and Attractive Neighbourhoods	Priority 4 – Workplace Health
X		X	

1.2 Consideration:

- X Information
- Discussion
- Decision
- Endorsement

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- a) Note the report for information

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Health and Wellbeing Board of key health protection issues for Slough and to provide an update on work underway to mitigate them.
- 2.2 The report will outline
 - Key health protection risks and issues
 - The current situation and challenges
 - Current and future work to tackle the issues highlighted

Background

- 2.3 *Health protection* is a term used to encompass a set of activities within public health. It is defined as protecting individuals, groups and populations from infectious disease and non-infectious public health threats including radiation, chemical and environmental hazards¹.
- 2.4 Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and Local Authorities (LAs) have statutory responsibilities to maintain an oversight function, ensuring plans are in place to mitigate health protection risks for their population and to support the health protection response work of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA); this is set out in the Health and Social Care Act (2012).
- 2.5 The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) classifies LAs as Category 1 responders with statutory responsibilities for actively planning for and leading the response to health protection incidents and emergencies. Category 1 Responders are also responsible for warning, informing, and advising the public.
- 2.6 The East Berkshire Health Protection Board takes a system-wide overview of organisations and other stakeholders contributing to health protection across East Berkshire. The purpose of the Board is to provide oversight and assurance to the three Health and Wellbeing Boards across Berkshire East, regarding the adequacy of prevention, surveillance, planning and response to health protection issues that affect Berkshire East residents. The current relationship is outlined in Appendix A.

Overview of Key Health Protection Issues for Slough

2.7 Vaccine Preventable Disease

- 2.7.1 Measles: There continues to be a high number of measles cases nationally with 674 confirmed cases in England since 1st January 2025. Most (48%) are in London with 3.4% of cases in the South East. Sporadic cases are being seen locally, which is a concern as measles spreads easily in unvaccinated populations. In Slough, uptake for one dose MMR (Measles, Mumps & Rubella) vaccination at 2 years was 87.1%, with uptake of two doses at 5 years being

¹ [Public Health Protection and Health Security Framework Outline Agreement](#)

83.9% (2023/24) which is lower than both the England average and lower than the UKHSA national target of 95%, the level required to prevent widespread outbreaks.

2.7.2 The Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccination programme started on 1st September 2024. Uptake across Frimley ICB is lower than that South East average with 34% of older adults (routine), 67.98% of older adults (catch up) and 41.3% of the maternity cohort taking the vaccine. This in comparison to 36.4%, 69.1% and 46.1% for the South East respectively. Uptake varied across Slough Primary Care Networks (PCNs), but tends to be on the lower side compared to other PCNs across Frimley.

2.7.3 Current work:

- Planning for the [Autumn Winter 2025 Vaccination Campaign for Covid and Flu](#) is underway following the [National flu Immunisation programme 2025-2026 letter](#).
- In July 2025, NHS England launched a national RSV invitation campaign to support uptake of the vaccine.
- The NHS Frimley Vaccination Strategy 2024/26 includes a priority to focus on areas of low uptake in underserved groups, including Slough childhood immunisations.
- Following a pilot across Berkshire, the Child Health Information Service (CHIS) launched their '100% letter to text-first' childhood vaccination invitations in June 2025, across Surrey and Thames Valley. The pilot had showed that texting before letters had a marked positive impact on uptake for children in ethnic minorities and in higher deprivation areas. The texts remind parents to contact their GP to book an appointment.
- The School Aged Immunisation team carry out regular promotions for immunisations at health and wellbeing events and have linked with CVS groups, Children's Centres and schools. A recent pilot offered vaccinations in selected school-based nursery settings across Thames Valley, in order to improve flu vaccine uptake among two and three year olds. This included five nurseries in Slough, chosen in areas with low uptake of vaccinations via the GP.
- There are planned changes to the routine immunisation programme, including bringing forward the second dose of the MMR vaccine so children born on or after 1st July 2024 will be offered their second MMR dose when they attend their new 18-month appointment. This is aimed to improve the uptake of MMR at the population level.
- The Slough Childhood Immunisation Steering Group (led by Public Health) reviews and monitors childhood immunisation rates in Slough with a focus on low uptake areas. The group collaboratively works on targeting schools, wards and diverse populations to increase immunisations, enhancing professional training and utilising targeted communication strategies.

2.8 Infectious Diseases

2.8.1 Tuberculosis

2.8.1.1 Slough has the highest incidence of TB across the South East, with a rate of 33 per 100,000 in 2024 – a moderate decrease from 34.2 per 100,000 in 2023, but still significantly higher than regional and national averages (8.5 per 100,000 in England).

2.8.1.2 In May 2025, there was an identified cluster of TB among the drug user community in Slough. There are strong associations between TB and socioeconomic deprivation, poor housing conditions and overcrowding. Individuals who misuse substances are at a higher risk for both TB and complications, in part due to their high risk social environments and difficulties in accessing healthcare.

2.8.1.3 Current work:

- Specialist TB nurses provide a community based service across East Berkshire. This includes new entrant TB screening, active and latent TB management, Directly Observed TB therapy (DOT), TB contact tracing and screening, education and advice for healthcare workers, annual screening of homeless people, BCG vaccinations and care in the community.
- Exercise Bacilius took place in February 2025 to clarify roles and responsibility in managing TB cases in the South East and improve collaboration. Participation included Slough Public Health, Frimley ICB, Wexham Park TB service, among others.
- There is planned work to raise awareness of TB symptoms and testing pathways in the drug using community in Slough. This work in collaboration between Slough Borough Council Public health, UKHSA, Wexham Park Hospital TB team, Frimley ICB and Turning Point and will include work with local experts to create culturally sensitive messages about TB symptoms, testing services and infection risk.

2.8.2 Emerging trends in Sexually transmitted Infections

2.8.2.1 The rate of sexually transmitted Shigella infections has been increasing in Slough since 2021, particularly in men. This increase is at least in part due to the re-emergency of an outbreak strain in 2021, which subsequently became extensively drug resistant.

2.8.2.2 New STI diagnoses (excluding chlamydia aged 24 and under) have been showing an increasing trend in Slough with 472 per 100,000 diagnoses in 2024. This is similar to that for England (482 per 100,000) but rates are now similar to pre-pandemic figures.

2.8.2.3 The Chlamydia detection rate in Slough is decreasing and at 766 per 100,000, was well below the national target of a detection rate of at least 3,250 per 100,000 (female population aged 15 – 24). This has been a declining trend since 2019 and reflects both the coverage of testing and acceptability of services, with any detection rate likely to be an underestimate of the true number of infections in the population.

2.8.2.4 **Current work:** The data on sexually transmitted infections is currently being studied by public health to fully understand trends and potential opportunities for prevention.

2.9 Non infectious risks to health

2.9.1 Heatwaves

2.9.1.1 **Issue:** From 17th June 2025 – 15th August 2025, there has been one yellow alert and four amber alerts issued for the South East. An amber alert indicates that weather impacts are likely to be felt across the whole health service with a potential increase to risk for health for individuals aged over 65 years or those with pre-existing conditions, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

2.9.1.2 Actions taken:

- UKHSA guidance on staying safe in hot weather is available online and has been shared through stakeholder cascades.
- Slough Borough Council has shared regular communications with the public via social media pages.
- The Met Office alerts have been shared through the council's corporate resilience group, including UKHSA action cards with guidance on how to take action for a range of professional groups (including commissioners, voluntary and community sector, care homes and residential settings, services delivering care to people in their homes, hospitals and other healthcare settings).
- The Heatwave Severe Emergency Plan has been activated each time in response to alerts issued by UKHSA and the Met Office. The Rough Sleeper Outreach team distributes water and sunscreen to people on the street and The Curve provides a space for people who wish to seek shade.

2.10 Planning for responding to emergencies affecting Health

2.10.1 **Pegasus:** This is a national exercise to assess elements of the UK's preparedness, capabilities and response arrangements in the context of a pandemic arising from a novel infectious disease between September and November 2025. Local authorities and the NHS are involved via the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum.

2.10.2 **Corporate Resilience:** The corporate resilience group at Slough Borough Council has now been set up with the responsibility of overseeing and driving organisational resilience activities to achieve an organisation that can appropriately respond to disruption and civil emergencies. It enables cross-departmental collaboration and engagement, gathering and sharing information regarding risks and developing strategies to manage risk proactively.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Health and Well-being Board and Partners Implications

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the update and consider where they may be able to support the work outlined.

3.2 *Equality implications*

Equality considerations are important in health protection as deprived and ethnic minority communities often experience higher rates of infectious disease and a disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards. There are vulnerabilities seen in inclusion health groups with greater exposure to health protection issues and lower uptake of preventative measures such as vaccination. Slough Public Health applies a health equity lens to health protection work and seeks to embed equality considerations in the design and delivery of both services and programmes of work to mitigate the issues outlined above.

3.3 *Environmental implications [Mandatory]*

Environmental considerations are inextricably linked with health protection work including environmental threats such as air pollution, climate change, flooding and emerging environmental risks such as antimicrobial resistance.

Please state 'None' if there are no implications:

Financial implications

None

Legal implications

None

Risk management implications

The newly formed Corporate Resilience group, outlined above, encompasses risk management as part of its remit.

Procurement implications [Discretionary]

None

Workforce implications

None

Property implications

None

4. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix A: Emergency Planning and Resilience Structure (Thames Valley and Berkshire East).

Illustration of the relationships between the Berkshire East Health Protection Board, the wider Health Protection Network within the South East and the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

