

Health Protection Newsletter – Autumn Edition

Volume 5 | Issue 3 | Autumn 2026



Pumpkin Patches

Winter Preparedness

Handwashing Activity At Nursery

Awaab's Law

Community Safety Tool

Staff Flu Vaccination

Surveillance Data

Staying safe on seasonal farm settings!

We are now at the start of autumn with the October holidays approaching fast. Outdoor settings such as pumpkin patches are opening up their doors all over the North East for families to enjoy. There will be lots of activities being offered, from pumpkin picking to animal experiences such as feeding and cuddling. There is no doubt they are fun to visit and create lovely memories. However, it is important to be mindful that there are health risks associated with visiting such settings. Animals and the environments they live in, can harbour parasites and bacteria that can cause illness in people such as diarrhoea, vomiting, and abdominal pain, and although rare, can lead to serious complications. These parasites and bacteria can live in animals' gut, on their body and in their environment. Examples of these organisms include Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Salmonella and E. coli O157. They are transmitted through the faecal-oral route, which means that they can be passed to a person by putting contaminated fingers in mouths or by putting hands on faces after touching animals, animal droppings or contaminated surfaces around the environment, such as fences and gates.

Hand washing is one of the most simple and effective control measures that can be used to combat harmful parasites and bacteria. Hands should be washed with warm running water and liquid soap and dried with paper towels or air hand dryer. Alcohol gel/hand rub is not effective against parasites and bacteria found in animals and their environment.

We have some helpful tips below to help reduce transmission when you and your family visit an outdoor setting.

Wash hands before:

- Eating and drinking
- Leaving outdoor settings (If no access to hand washing facilities use wet wipes, but wash hands thoroughly as soon as hand washing facilities become available)



Contact:

You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

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Wash Hands After

- Going to the toilet
- Touching or feeding animals or contact with surfaces in animal areas such as fences and gates
- Picking pumpkins
- Playing on play equipment
- Changing/cleaning footwear
- Cleaning pram/buggy/bike/wheelchair wheels



Key points

- Supervise children at all times and especially around handwashing
- Only eat in designated picnic/café areas after washing hands
- Only drink from designated drinking water taps.
- Do not eat and drink while touching animals or walking around animal areas
- Avoid kissing animals
- Do not eat food that has fallen to the ground
- Avoid contact with farm animals if pregnant
- Clean pram/buggy/bike/wheelchair wheels / outdoor shoes after leaving an outdoor setting and prior to taking indoors then wash hands.

Checklist of items to take on a Visit

- Wet Wipes
- Wellington boots/outdoor shoes
- Snow/puddle/boiler suits for children
- Change of shoes for after visit and suitable storage for dirty shoes/wellingtons in waterproof bag/container
- Change of outer clothing for after visit

If anyone becomes unwell after a visit

If you or a family member become unwell or have symptoms of abdominal pain, sickness and/or diarrhoea (sometimes bloody) within two weeks of visiting an outdoor setting, please get in touch with your local GP or 111 out of hours for advice and inform them that there has been a recent visit to an outdoor setting.

Useful links for further information

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/outdoor-health/bugs-and-germs/avoiding-bugs-and-germs-outdoors>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/escherichia-coli-e-coli-O157>

Educational Resources to learn about microbes for children <https://www.e-bug.eu/>

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Winter preparedness: Care Settings Are You Ready for Winter?

As winter approaches, now is the time to prepare for the expected increase in respiratory and gastrointestinal infections (GI) within our communities and care settings.

Winter illness can lead to outbreaks that affect both residents and staff and can impact everyone's enjoyment of the festive season. Taking a few simple steps now can make a big difference in reducing disruption and helping to keep residents, visitors and staff safe throughout the winter months.

Wee reminders

PCR Swabs- where to access PCR swabs has not changed. Information on how and where to access PCR swabs is available on the Health Protection Team webpage. [Health Protection Resources - Care Settings](#)

Don't Forget the Visors! When caring for residents with respiratory symptoms/confirmed respiratory illness staff should wear an apron, gloves, a fluid-resistant surgical mask, **and** a visor.

Chest Infections: Could It be a virus? Secondary bacterial infections can occur following a viral illness, particularly in the elderly. If a resident has new onset of respiratory symptoms, isolate and get a PCR swab.

Updates

Transmission-Based Precautions (TBPs)- If you have not already done so, please take some time to familiarise yourself with the updated TBPs guidance.

A useful PowerPoint presentation outlining the changes has now been uploaded to the [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual \(NIPCM\) News](#) section. There are also several helpful resources available, including:

- [Transmission Based Precautions changes - FAQs for staff](#)
- [TBPs what's changed](#)

Anne's Law: Code of Practice- Anne's Law supports residents' rights to maintain contact with loved ones, including during outbreaks. Clear documentation of each resident's visiting preferences and nominated Essential Care Supporter should be clearly documented for each resident in their care plan.

Health Protection Team Webpage- Our webpage contains frequently asked questions, quick-reference guides, and links to relevant guidance. [Health Protection Resources - Care Settings](#)

Now Is a Good Time To...

- ✓ Refresh staff knowledge on infection prevention and control (IPC) and outbreak management, particularly for staff who have not previously worked through an outbreak.
- ✓ Carry out refresher training on the correct donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- ✓ Review outbreak plans, including cohorting arrangements and staffing contingency plans.
- ✓ Check PPE stock levels (gloves, aprons, fluid-resistant surgical masks and visors)
- ✓ Check all staff know how and where to access PCR swabs and stool sampling kits.
- ✓ Remind staff that they can receive their flu vaccination either alongside resident vaccination sessions or by booking through the staff vaccination portal or staff clinics, remember to bring your staff ID card.

[Online Booking Portal](#) | [Staff Clinics](#) | Vaccination Contact Team: 01224 555 333

Winter preparedness training 2026

Our Health Protection Team Winter Preparedness Webinar will be held online on the 3rd November 2026. Please keep an eye on your emails and the Health Protection Team webpage for further details.

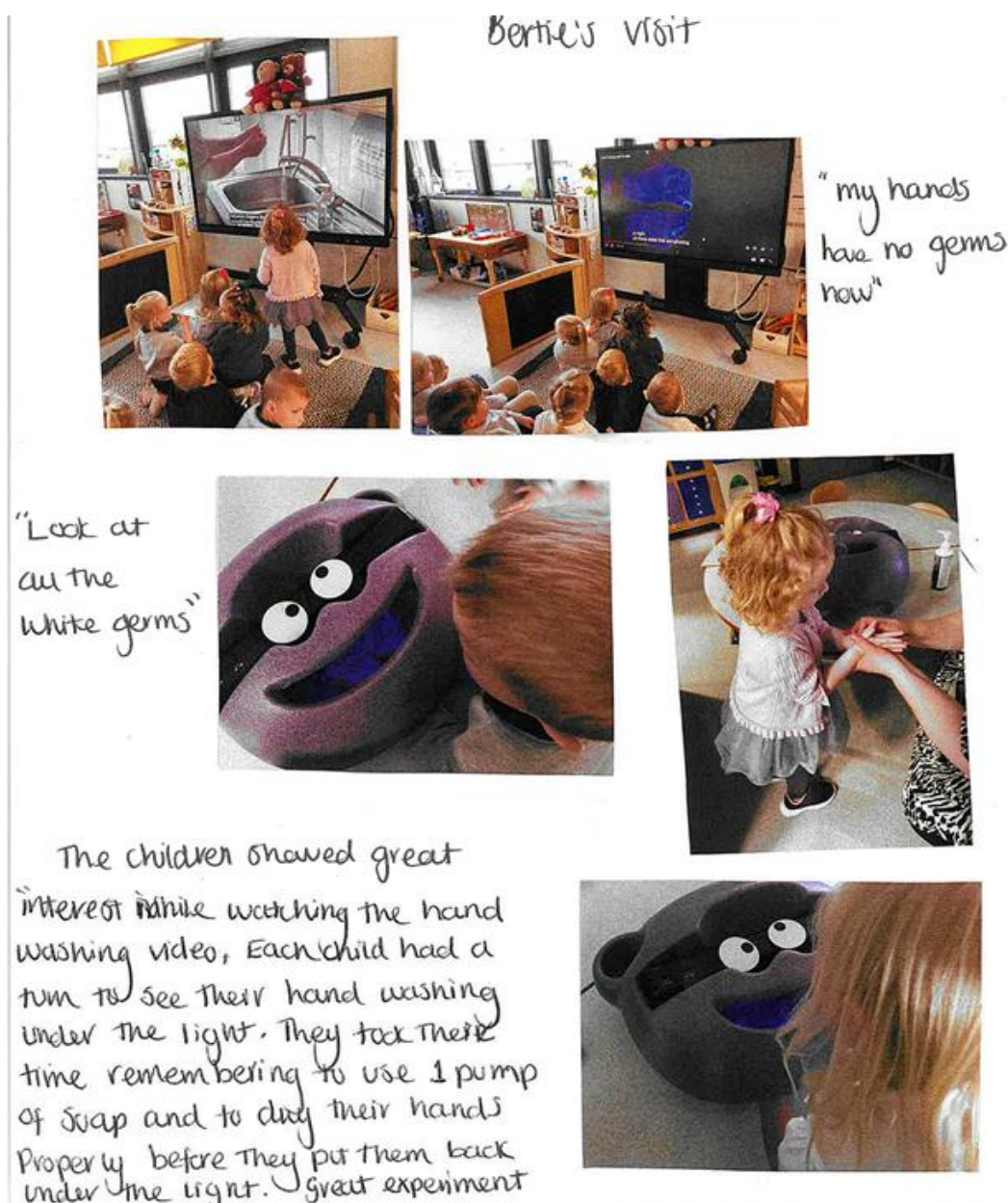
We look forward to seeing you there.

Hand Washing with Aberdeenshire EHO team

The Food Team at Aberdeenshire Council Environmental Health were delighted when Rosehearty Nursery made contact regarding improving hand hygiene with the new 2026/27 pupil intake. Bertie, the Aberdeenshire Bug Monster, was then sent on his way to teach the children all about handwashing and to help them to 'see' the bugs on their hands and to ensure that they were removing them with effective handwashing.

Staff and children started their journey to safe hands, by watching the Aberdeenshire Council Handwashing video, then put what they had learned into practice. They first looked at their hands before handwashing, then again after they washed their hands looking carefully for any areas they might have missed. A fun but educational time was had by all and the children loved having Bertie in their nursery!

Report by Lorna Ross, Environmental Health Aberdeenshire Council, photos and notes by Judith & the children of Rosehearty Primary School Nursery



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Awaab's Law – Brief Overview

The Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026, commonly referred to as “Awaab’s Law”, will come into force on 6 October 2026. From this date landlords in Scotland will be required to investigate reports of damp or mould and commence any required repairs within set timescales, I have laid out the key timeframes below:

Action	Timescale
Investigate report of damp or mould	Within 10 working days
Provide written findings	Within 3 working days
Start required repairs	Within 5 working days
Unable to meet deadline?	Explain reasons and revised timescale in writing

1. Ensure that a competent person investigates reports of damp or mould within 10 working days of becoming aware of them.
2. Produce a written summary of investigation findings and issue this to the tenant or their representative within 3 working days of the investigation concluding.
3. If the investigation determines substantial damp or mould, ensure repair work is commenced within 5 working days upon conclusion of the investigation.
4. Ensure the house will continue to be substantially free from damp and mould, as far as reasonably practicable.
5. If a landlord is unable to adhere to these timescales, then they must set out in writing to the tenant the reasons why and the expected timescale in which they will comply.

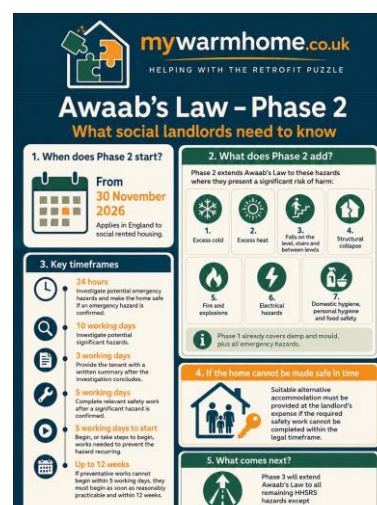
Important

Landlords must not assume that damp or mould is caused by tenant behaviour. Every report must be appropriately investigated before conclusions are reached. Where investigations identify lifestyle-related causes rather than building defects, landlords should explain the findings and signpost tenants to appropriate advice and support.

The Scottish Government has now published guidance for landlords and tenants on the new duties which can be found by clicking on the links below.

Lynn Eagers

Landlord Registration Officer



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New tool to support community safety conversations

A new resource was launched on 17 September to help services and partners better understand how local places affect people's sense of safety.

The Place Standard Tool Community Safety Lens has been developed by Public Health Scotland and Safer Communities Scotland. It adds a community safety focus to the existing Place Standard Tool, helping teams gather views from communities about what makes people feel safe, welcome and included in their local area.

The tool can be used to support engagement activities, place-based planning and service improvement. It provides practical prompts across 14 themes to help structure conversations, identify local priorities and highlight opportunities for action.

Our Community Safety and Housing teams were involved in piloting the tool in Buckie, helping to test how it can be used to support local discussions and shape community priorities.

The Community Safety Lens can be used in a range of settings, including neighbourhoods, town centres and public spaces. It encourages services to hear from a wide range of people, including those whose views may not always be represented.

Staff involved in community engagement, planning, housing, community safety and place-based work are encouraged to explore the resource and consider how it could support their work.

The full toolkit, guidance and supporting materials is available on the Our Place website:

<https://ourplace.scot/toolbox>



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Staff flu Vaccination

All NHS health workers and social care workers who have direct contact with the public are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

We know that there are many cases of flu with mild or no symptoms. This means you may feel fit and healthy and be working but still able to pass on the flu virus to the people you work with and look after. They may be more vulnerable to severe infection. Last year in Grampian there were 484 people with flu in Grampian hospitals. That took up 2002 bed days.

For up to date information of how to get your flu jab visit [hscw | Vax Grampian](#)

NHS Grampian offer this year will include:

- Staff booked clinics
- Staff drop in clinics
- Peer to peer vaccinators
- Roving vaccinators
- Staff at care homes will have vaccination offers in their workplace
- Staff can also drop into some of our vaccination centres, but will have to wait at busy times. For full details before you travel check [hscw | Vax Grampian](#)

We have looked at last years' staff flu uptake and found that there is a variation in uptake of the vaccination across staff groups. Nearly 60% of doctors and dentists take the flu vaccination with uptake decreasing significantly in other job families.

The staff vaccination survey found that the majority of vaccinated staff rated the experience as "very good", with roving vaccinators (4.97/5) and peer vaccination (4.64/5) the highest rated methods. We know from the survey that large numbers of staff do not want the vaccination because of worries about the vaccination and its side effects. The flu programme is very well established and studied. Please come to an appointment and discuss your concerns with our vaccinators.

We are still recruiting for peer to peer vaccinators across Grampian hospitals. This is one of the most convenient ways for staff to receive vaccination and we thank all our peer vaccinators for their support. Further information can be found by emailing gram.peertopeervaccs@nhs.scot

And remember if your area can't afford staff time to have a vaccination, they can't afford for staff to be off with flu.



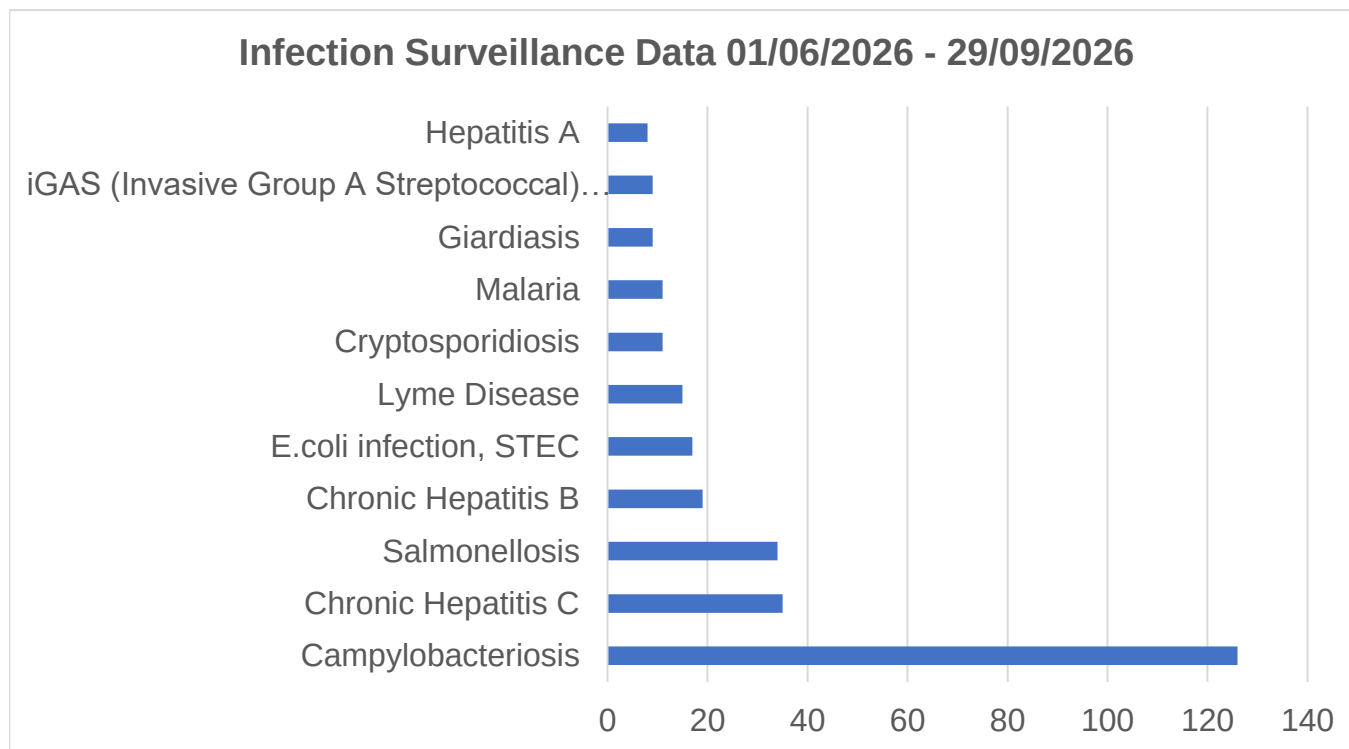
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Health Protection Surveillance Data Snapshot

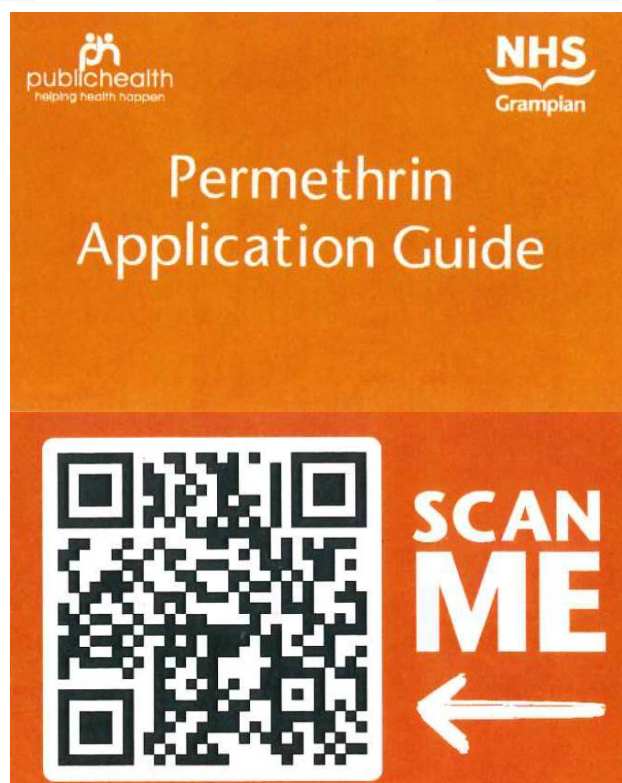


The above is a snapshot of some of the most notified organisms in the last quarter but does not cover all notifications received by the Health Protection Team.

Noteworthy Updates

Health Protection in children and young people settings: [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

Public health management of scabies: [Overview - Public health management of scabies - version 1 - Public health management of scabies - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)



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