Winter 2026 Issue 15

An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in Hitchin and Whitwell

@hitchinandwhitwellpcn

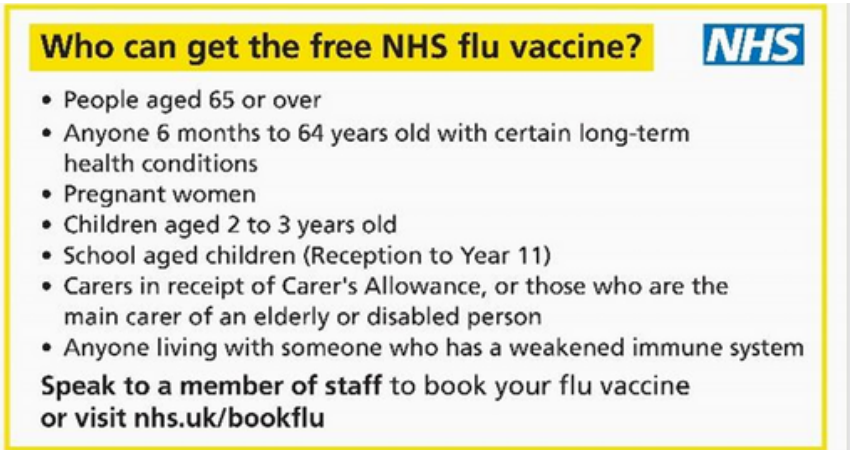
HWPCN

Hitchin & Whitwell Primary Care Network

Welcome to your quarterly Primary Care Network newsletter!

Welcome to the latest edition of the Hitchin and Whitwell Primary Care Network (PCN) newsletter, your local update on healthcare services, events, and initiatives in our community.

Happy New Year! Although we're now deep into January, it's still not too late to get your flu jab – practices and community pharmacy still have some vaccine available to protect you and your loved ones. Pregnant women are also advised to get immunised against flu, as well as whooping cough (after 16 weeks of pregnancy) and RSV (after 28 weeks).



PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM CHICKEN POX (VARICELLA)

Although chicken pox is usually considered an unpleasant but mild illness in children, there are occasionally serious complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis (brain inflammation). A vaccine is now available to prevent chicken pox.

From 1 January 2026, all children will be offered a combined measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) vaccine instead of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) as part of the childhood routine 2-dose vaccination schedule. Dose 1 will be offered at one year of age and dose 2 will be brought forward from 3 years 4 months to the new 18-month appointment.

From 1 November 2026 to 31 March 2028 there will be a single dose selective MMRV catch-up programme for older children who have not yet had chickenpox infection or 2 doses of varicella vaccination.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

We are delighted to welcome Mandy Baydal, our new, experienced Mental Health Practitioner, who is now working in our PCN. Mandy will be able to see patients with some mental health conditions for an initial assessment and treatment plan and she can also follow up appropriate patients. All our practices now have a total triage model and, if appropriate, you may be offered an appointment with Mandy.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS!

Do you know what your blood pressure is? More than half a million adults are estimated to have undiagnosed high blood pressure, a condition which can increase your risk of a heart attack or a stroke.

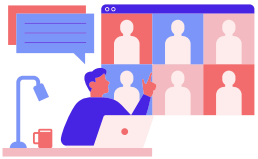
If you're over 40 and have not been diagnosed with high blood pressure, you can have a free blood pressure check at your local community pharmacy.

MEN'S HEALTH WEBINARS

We have been running a series of Men's Health Webinars on the second Thursday evening of the month from 6-7pm. See below for our remaining webinars:

12th February 2026, Musculoskeletal Issues, Everyone Active Fitness Manager

13th March 2026, Nutrition and Diabetes



If you've missed any of our webinars so far, they're available on-line:

https://www.youtube.com/@HitchinWhitwellPCN

Many thanks to Pinehill Hospital, for enabling Dr Azan Ghuran, cardiologist, and Professor Nikhil Vasdev, urologist, to host two of the webinars, and to Mark Kear and Juanita Prescott from Everyone Active for their ongoing support.

NEW YEARS' RESOLUTION?

Have you thought about walking more and making new friends? Why not join one of the many Hertfordshire Health Walks led by friendly, trained volunteers. On Wednesdays at 2pm there's a grade 1-2 walk from North Herts Museum, and you're welcome to join the walkers for a cuppa afterwards! All walks are listed at this link:

North Herts Health Walks Timetable January - April 2026

Hertfordshire
Health
Walks
Hertfordshire County Council

Walking is the simplest way to improve and maintain your health

10 reasons why it's good for you:

Better physical health

- Strengthens your heart
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol
- Reduces risk of heart disease and stroke
- Improves bone and muscle strength
- Improves balance and coordination

Free
Social
Local
Short

Better mental health and wellbeing

- Improves confidence by socialising with others
- Boosts your mood
- Increases energy and stamina
- Reduces stress
- Improves sleep

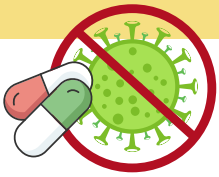
Join us for a Health Walk near you!

Contact our friendly team to find out more:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks
healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk
01992 555888

Hertfordshire

PHARMACY FIRST



Your local community pharmacy can offer advice and treatment for many conditions including athlete's foot, haemorrhoids and thrush. They also offer contraceptive services and can help with the below seven common conditions, for which they can prescribe antibiotics if appropriate:

- **Sinusitis**
- **Sore throat**
- **Earache**
- **Infected insect bite**
- **Impetigo**
- **Shingles**
- **Urinary tract infection**

Ask your local pharmacy for more information on this **free** NHS service....

Visit your **Pharmacy First**!

GROWING RESILIENCE IN TEENS (GRIT)

GRIT!
GROWING RESILIENCE IN TEENS

Growing Resilience in Teens (GRIT) is an award winning charity for 11-24 year olds, dedicated to supporting young people's mental health through group boxing and 1:1 coaching sessions in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Their services are available both in school and outside
of school hours depending on the needs of the young person.

GRIT provides a safe and supportive environment to help empower young people to take full responsibility for their lives and the lives they want to lead, through a unique coaching methodology blended with physical activity. GRIT aims to make a lasting impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people, creating resilience, self-confidence and emotional wellbeing; supporting them to navigate the challenges of adolescence, build a strong foundation for adulthood and lead fulfilling lives.

For more information please visit: **www.gritcharity.org** or email **hello@gritcharity.org**

CARERS' CAFÉ

Finally, our award-winning Carers' Café has passed the two year mark!

Pop along to St Mary's Church Hall, Hitchin on Friday mornings 10am-12noon for friendly support from professionals, volunteers and other carers over a cup of tea.

CARERS' Café

We would love to hear your thoughts! If you would like to give feedback about our newsletter please contact: **hwpcn.admin@nhs.net**

Thank You