

Tuberculosis in the United Kingdom

See report Tuberculosis in the UK 2015, the report from Public Health England (PHE), released on 1 October 2015:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuberculosis-in-england-annual-report>

Press Release here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tb-rates-in-england-continue-to-decline>

England (the part of the UK covered by PHE) has a complex TB story, since it continues to have the highest number of new cases diagnosed in any western (high income) European country each year, yet has also seen a 10% decline in each of the last two years (2012-13 and 2013-14). This 10% decline is the rate which the Stop TB Partnership's Global Plan to End TB says the world must reach to make to the WHO End TB Targets (by 2035). This rate of decline has not been seen since the period following World War II in developed countries.

The total number of new TB diagnoses in England fell from 8,086 in 2012, to 7,257 in 2013, and 6,520 in 2014. This fall has largely been attributed by PHE to migration patterns—because less people from high burden TB-countries have migrated to the UK in recent years, the numbers of TB cases in the non-UK born population have fallen. The UK's screening programme has also detected more active TB cases in their country of origin prior to migration, and these people need to be treated and cleared of active TB before being allowed to enter the UK.

New diagnosis rates in the UK-born population have remained the same in the past decade, despite most other Western European countries seeing falls in new TB diagnoses in their own home-born populations.

More than a quarter of those newly diagnosed in the UK in 2014 were UK-born (28%), while the remaining 72% were born outside the UK. Of the UK-born new infections, 62% were white, meaning that out of the 6520 new infections in 2014, 1,091 (or 1 in 6 in all new infections) were white-UK born. This shows that TB is not just a disease of migration, as it can often be portrayed. Anyone can be infected by TB. Around 40% of all new infections were in the London region, with a further 12% in the West Midlands region.

Only a small number (52) of new cases diagnosed in the UK were multidrug resistant TB (MDR-TB). However, there is an estimated 10-fold difference in treatment costs for these cases. A 'regular', drug-susceptible TB case costs £5,000 (GBP to treat in the UK, while an MDR-TB case can cost £50,000-£70,000.

What is being done to combat TB in the UK?

PHE recently established TB control boards for 6 regions in England, and has launched its Collaborative TB Strategy, aiming to further bring down rates of TB especially in those populations most vulnerable to infection, including homeless people, migrants from high-burden countries, and people with co-infection with HIV or other health complications. Finding, testing and treating close contacts of those who have been infected will also be essential to bring new infection rates down further.

The 10 evidence-based pillars of the PHE strategy are:

- Improve access to services and ensure early diagnosis
- Provide universal access to high-quality diagnostics

- Improve treatment and care services
- Ensure comprehensive contact tracing
- Improve BCG vaccination uptake
- Reduce drug-resistant TB
- Tackle TB in under-served populations
- Systematically implement new entrant latent TB (LTBI) screening
- Strengthen surveillance and monitoring
- Ensure an appropriate workforce to deliver TB control

Full details can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403231/Collaborative_TB_Strategy_for_England_2015_2020_.pdf

Case studies of TB in the UK

Results (an advocacy organisation) has prepared a document that provides a number of UK TB case studies, with each patient detailing his or her battle with the disease.

Amy McConville is one of the cases featured in this document. To arrange interviews with Amy and/or other UK case studies, please contact Helen Clegg, Communications Manager, TB Alert, Brighton, UK. T) +44 (0) 1273 234030 | Mobile +44 (0) 7949 675033 helen.clegg@tbalert.org

For Amy's story and other case studies, see:

<http://results.org.uk/sites/default/files/UK%20TB%20Voices%20Final%20Low%20Res.pdf>