Westmorland & Furness Council

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Infection Prevention Newsletter - November 2023

This month we are looking at antimicrobial resistance or AMR for short. Between the 18th and 24th November, some Council buildings will be lit up in blue to highlight:

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared AMR to be one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity. AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to medicines such as antibiotics, making infections increasingly difficult or impossible to treat.

Antimicrobials include antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics - these are medications that are used to prevent and treat infections in humans, animals and plants. Microorganisms that develop resistance to antimicrobials can be sometimes referred to as 'Superbugs' further information can be found via this link to the WHO AMR website.

Resistance is accelerated by-

- Poor infection prevention practice and control practice
- Self-medication of antibiotics
- People not finishing the whole prescribed dose of antimicrobials often due to feeling better
- Lack of replacement or alternative medicines. There have been no new classes of antibiotics developed since the 1980's
- Unnecessary prescribing of antibiotics

How can we support the fight against AMR?

Infection prevention and control is essential in the fight against AMR, reducing the need for antimicrobials. Robust IPC measures really do prevent the spread of infection. Hand hygiene remains one of the most effective ways to reduce transmission of infections but must be used alongside other preventative methods such as correct use of PPE, environmental decontamination, isolation of symptomatic residents / staff remaining away from work.
PPE must be used according to need, ensuring the correct method of application (donning) and removal (doffing) is adhered to. PPE is a barrier but is only effective when used correctly. Poor doffing techniques of PPE contribute to the spread of infection and contamination of staff and residents.
Around 50% of avoidable infections in healthcare delivery could have been prevented through good hand hygiene alone. In 2019 it is thought AMR was directly linked to more than 1.2 million deaths globally and this number is likely to continue to rise without urgent action.

Good environmental cleaning and decontamination is essential, paying close attention to cleaning solution contact times, correct concentration (not too weak, not too strong) of cleaning fluids and suitability of the product for the task. Ensure the environment is in a good state of repair as any surface that has lost its integrity cannot be cleaned effectively and will harbour microorganisms. These should be reported and replaced or repaired as a matter of urgency.

When it comes to antibiotics, remember: