THE DIGEST / UK CONSUMER UPDATES

Your practical digest

16 October 2026

Useful updates for life in the UK, explained with practical steps and links to the original sources.

In this edition

1. **Flu-like symptoms caused many people to miss work or school, UKHSA says**
2. **Fireworks: tell neighbours and soak debris before disposal**

Information can change after publication. Check the linked source before acting. This digest is general information, not personal financial or legal advice.

01 / GOVERNMENT

Flu-like symptoms caused many people to miss work or school, UKHSA says

Source published: 15 October 2026 · Checked: 16 October 2026

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) findings from two winter seasons show that 47% of surveyed people in work or education who reported flu-like symptoms missed work or school. UKHSA says eligible people should get a free NHS flu vaccine as soon as possible. The findings cover the 2023–24 and 2024–25 seasons, not the current winter.

Who it affects

The reported absence figure concerns FluSurvey participants in work or education who had flu-like symptoms during the previous winter seasons studied.

What to do next

1. If you are unsure whether you or your child can get a free NHS flu vaccine:

2. Check eligibility and book through the NHS App or NHS website, contact your GP practice, or visit a participating pharmacy.

3. If your child has been offered the vaccine, the source urges you to arrange it as early in the season as possible.

4. If you have flu-like symptoms, stay at home, practise good hand hygiene and cover coughs and sneezes.

5. Avoid contact with people particularly at risk, and do not visit vulnerable people in hospitals or care homes.

What this means for you

If you are unsure whether you or your child can get a free NHS flu vaccine:
1. Check eligibility and book through the NHS App or NHS website, contact your GP practice, or visit a participating pharmacy.
2. If your child has been offered the vaccine, the source urges you to arrange it as early in the season as possible.
3. If you have flu-like symptoms, stay at home, practise good hand hygiene and cover coughs and sneezes.
4. Avoid contact with people particularly at risk, and do not visit vulnerable people in hospitals or care homes.

Original sources

Data shows almost half of people with flu-like symptoms miss work or school: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/data-shows-almost-half-of-people-with-flu-like-symptoms-miss-work-or-school

02 / MONEY

Fireworks: tell neighbours and soak debris before disposal

Source published: 19 October 2020 · Checked: 16 October 2026

The Office for Product Safety and Standards' 2026 fireworks campaign asks people to consider how displays affect neighbours, animals and shared spaces. It recommends giving neighbours advance notice, following the instructions and safety distance, and soaking spent fireworks and debris overnight before disposal.

Who it affects

The fireworks guidance and 2026 campaign materials are provided for the public, local authorities and community groups.

What to do next

1. If you are planning a firework display, the campaign advises:

2. Give neighbours advance notice so they, their children or animals can prepare.

3. Read the instructions, follow the required safety distance and make sure everyone involved knows what to do.

4. Wait until spent fireworks and debris are completely cool.

5. Soak them in water overnight, then bag and dispose of them appropriately. Do not leave debris in shared spaces or neighbouring gardens.

What this means for you

If you are planning a firework display, the campaign advises:
1. Give neighbours advance notice so they, their children or animals can prepare.
2. Read the instructions, follow the required safety distance and make sure everyone involved knows what to do.
3. Wait until spent fireworks and debris are completely cool.
4. Soak them in water overnight, then bag and dispose of them appropriately. Do not leave debris in shared spaces or neighbouring gardens.

Original sources

My safety: fireworks: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/my-safety-fireworks