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[www.rochdale.gov.uk](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk)

To: All Schools and Early Years Settings including Family Hubs

14th November 2023

Dear colleague,

### **Re: Preparing for measles resurgence in England**

Measles is a highly infectious disease, spreading quickly from person to person, especially in schools. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with. Measles can lead to serious complications, particularly in immunosuppressed individuals and young infants. It is also more severe in pregnancy, and increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, or preterm delivery.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) recently published a measles risk assessment which concluded that although the risk of a UK-wide measles epidemic is considered low, a measles outbreak of between 40,000 and 160,000 cases could occur in London, due to sub-optimal uptake of the Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine in the capital. Evidence also shows that outside of London, there is a high risk of cases linked to overseas travel leading to outbreaks in specific population groups. There has been a steady rise in measles cases this year. Seven laboratory confirmed cases have been reported in Northwest and **this week we have a confirmed case in Greater Manchester and are aware of an outbreak in Leicester.**

It is important to note that, all suspected measles cases should be promptly notified by a clinician to the UKHSA local Health Protection Team (HPT) to facilitate timely public health action. For more information about measles, see the nhs.uk website [here](#).

### **Mumps, Measles and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine:**

To maintain measles elimination and prevent measles outbreaks from occurring, **it is essential that our coverage meets in the WHO target of 95% coverage of two doses of MMR vaccine by age 5 years.** This is a NHS Long-Term Plan (LTP) commitment and high priority within NHS England.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MMR vaccine uptake rates fell globally. The coverage in UK has also fallen to the lowest level in a decade with 1<sup>st</sup> dose uptake in 2

year olds at 89% and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in 5 year olds 85.5%. **Our local uptake rates for 2023/24 are 1<sup>st</sup> dose at 84.8.% and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose at 83.3%.**

It is important to note that:

- children should receive their two doses of MMR vaccine on time at 12 months and at 3 years and 4 months
- the MMR vaccine can be given from six months of age before travel to a high risk country
- patients over the age of three years and four months who do not have two recorded doses of MMR vaccine should be caught up opportunistically. There is no upper age limit to offering MMR vaccine.
- new entrants from abroad and newly registered patients should have their immunisation history checked and missing doses caught up
- unvaccinated post-natal women should be offered any outstanding doses

We would really appreciate your support in increasing the awareness of the risks and improving the uptake of MMR vaccination within the borough. We therefore ask that you raise awareness of the importance of having the MMR vaccination and share the attached leaflet, also found [here](#) with colleagues, parents and carers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Thompson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Kuiama Thompson**  
**Director of Public Health**

# MEASLES

## Don't let your child catch it

– get them vaccinated with the MMR vaccine

- Measles is in the news again. There have been serious outbreaks in Wales and England and the number of children catching measles is rising.
- Measles can be a very serious disease, leading to ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, and damage to the brain. Measles can kill.
- Your child is at risk of measles if he or she hasn't had the MMR vaccination.
- Two doses of MMR vaccine are needed to get the best protection.
- If your child is due to have had two doses of MMR but has not yet received them, no matter what age they are, you should make an appointment with the surgery.\*
- If you can't remember if your child has had any, one or two doses of MMR vaccine, check his or her personal child health record (the Red Book). If this doesn't help, speak to the surgery.
- If you don't know how many doses your child has had, it's better to have two doses of MMR vaccine now rather than risk leaving them unprotected.

\*In response to a local outbreak then the two doses can be given one month apart from the age of 18 months.

# Answers to some common questions about measles and the MMR vaccine

## Why are we seeing these outbreaks of measles?

Measles is a highly infectious disease, spreading quickly from person to person, especially in schools. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with. Although we have high rates of vaccination in the UK, the levels dropped some years ago when the MMR vaccine was mistakenly associated with autism. This led to some babies not being vaccinated and so measles is spreading rapidly among these children now they are older.

## Because of the scare some years ago, I gave my child a single measles vaccination, can they have the two doses of MMR?

Yes; it's recommended your child has two doses of MMR. You will also be protecting them against rubella and mumps.

## When are the MMR vaccinations usually given?

The best times are between 12 and 13 months of age and again at three years and four months, with one dose on each occasion. But, if your child wasn't vaccinated then, they can be vaccinated at any age with two doses one month apart.

## Will there be any side effects to the vaccination?

Your child may get the symptoms of measles, mumps and rubella for up to six weeks after the vaccination but in a very much milder form. This proves that the vaccine is working and your child is building up resistance to future contact with the viruses that cause the three diseases. Not all children show these symptoms but that doesn't mean the vaccine isn't working.

## Should parents in outbreak areas get vaccinated against measles?

As with many diseases, once you have had measles, you don't catch it again because you have built up a natural resistance to it. So, if you've had measles or two doses of MMR vaccine you do not need to get vaccinated now.

Back in 1994, a large part of the population aged 5 to 16 was immunised against measles and rubella so people in this age group are almost certainly immune and therefore they too don't need to get vaccinated now.

For more information about measles and MMR go to: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx)