

NHS England

23 August 2023

Dear Simon, Debbie and Helen

**Measles Escalation 2023**

As you will be aware from various sources including the recent letter to primary care that we shared with you, measles is now circulating in England once again. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that Europe is likely to see an increase of infections and NHS England and UKHSA are keen to see an increase in vaccination rates.

Although the number of confirmed cases in HIOW remains low (3 in Hampshire in 2019 and 1 in Southampton in Q2 2023), there is a risk of an outbreak occurring in our area because of:

* Proximity to London / neighbouring counties with higher prevalence
* Travel to and from European countries with higher prevalence
* An increase in unvaccinated populations seeking asylum which reduces herd immunity.
* Forthcoming return to school in September

**Vaccination Uptake**

Achieving high rates of vaccination remains the best prevention strategy.

Nationally coverage for the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination programme in the UK has fallen to the lowest level in a decade. In HIOW, we have managed to sustain higher than average uptake, but it is still below the 95% target set by the WHO as the necessary level required to achieve and maintain elimination of measles.

To achieve 95% uptake of MMR vaccination in a timely way, HIOW needs to be achieving:

1) higher rates of vaccination with the first dose, as soon as possible after 12 months and

2) considerably higher uptake of the second dose before the age of 5 years.

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| **MMR Uptake, January to March 2023, COVER data.** | | | |  |
| MMR Uptake (%) | Hampshire County Council | Southampton Council | Portsmouth City Council | IOW Council |
| 1 dose by 24 months | 93.4 | 92.4 | 90.6 | 92.6 |
| 1 dose by 5 years | 95.8 | 92.8 | 93.5 | 92.6 |
| 2 doses by 5 years | 91.9 | 86.0 | 85.0 | 86.5 |

**Local Action**

HIOW Screening and Immunisation Team and UKHSA have been working closely with the HIOW system including via the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Health Protection Board and the HIOW Public Health Consultants Screening and Immunisation Forum, to align and implement actions to increase uptake of MMR vaccinations.

Recent actions in HIOW have included:

* A joint letter to all primary care and secondary care providers with advice on:
  + signs and symptoms to look out for
  + advice on handling of suspected cases (isolation, HPT notification, options regarding testing);
  + improving vaccination uptake for staff and patients.
* UKHSA organised a desktop exercise for the South East Region for the ICB and their system partners to work through an escalation measles scenario to ensure system-wide clarity about roles and responsibilities. An exercise findings report is currently being written to share the joint learning, good practice and recommendations for improvement.

A refresh of the HIOW Measles Elimination Strategy is underway and the consultation phase closed on the 14 August 2023 and Local Authority Public Health were asked to contribute. The feedback is currently being collated into a final version. The strategy includes work that is already underway as well as further developmental actions to re-embed high rates of vaccination into the HIOW system.

* CHIS letter to parents, to promote vaccination of 2-3 year olds with ‘flu vaccine, included a reminder to ensure MMR vaccination is up to date.
* Participation in the national Measles and Rubella Elimination Board (MAREB)and influencing national NHS England policy on how to address low MMR uptake.
* Engagement and training of staff in the Integrated Community Childrens Services, to support them in raising the need for MMR vaccination with parents of children under 5 years.
* Supporting the Horrid Hands project in nurseries which is funded by the Covid19 programme and increases vaccine awareness with children and parents.

Forthcoming actions in HIOW include:

* HIOW Screening and Immunisation Team is commissioning a similar Horrid Hands project with schools to promote vaccination in older age groups.
* UKHSA South East HPT, is developing a specific standard operating procedure for responding to cases and outbreaks of measles in places of prescribed detention, as we know that the uptake rates of vaccination in these settings remains low.
* The South East HPT and EPRR team are contributing towards the development of a new HIOW LHRP Memorandum of Understanding document to clarify roles and responsibilities in response to any infectious disease outbreak.

HIOW Screening and Immunisation Team will continue to make you aware of local issues and challenges via our DsPH Quarterly Assurance meetings and monthly briefings; with the next quarterly meeting taking place on the 1 September 2023.

**Request for your support**

We are asking for your support as follows:

* Support the HIOW Screening and Immunisation Team with any highlighted challenges as we lead the HIOW system to ensure robust prevention of measles and other vaccine preventable infectious disease.
* Support the South East Health Protection Team in responding to outbreaks, should there be an increase of measles cases in the region.
* Incorporate the resources in the appendix in your organisational and personal social media communications to encourage vaccination before travel; before attending a festival; before children return to school in September and to amplify national messages from forthcoming NHS England national and regional campaigns. Please note that it is recommended that target communications to schools are only sent if there are cases in the local area and after prompting from the Health Protection Team.
* The HPT will contact you if we receive a notification of a child or staff member at a school with measles. The HPT will provide template letters to the school about suspected or confirmed single cases, clusters or outbreaks, for them to circulate on to parents and staff. If useful, the HPT will also provide template letters for other local settings (such as neighbouring schools and healthcare settings). Please continue to contact the HPT if you are informed of suspected or confirmed measles cases in education settings.
* Measles transmission is of concern in all settings where there is a large cohort of unvaccinated individuals in close contact, so hotel settings for new migrants are particularly vulnerable settings. We are recommending that catch up MMR vaccination is prioritised in these settings.
* In the South East we have previously had incidents and outbreaks in sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities and we would request that Local Authorities link with their Traveller Liaison leads to ask them to promote MMR uptake in these Communities.

If you have any questions about this letter or actions needed, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely

**Clare Simpson **

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| Clare Simpson | Emma Richards |
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**Appendix**

**Rationale for action: UK measles epidemiology**

After briefly achieving measles elimination in 2016 and 2017, by 2018 measles virus transmission had re-established in the UK, at a time when the whole of Europe was experiencing large epidemics. In 2019 there were 880 lab confirmed measles cases in the UK and 82 cases were confirmed in early 2020 prior to the first COVID-19 lockdown in March. There were only two cases of measles in the UK in 2021 and 54 in 2022. From the 1 January to 31 June 2023 there have been 11lab confirmed measles cases in the South East.

Since 2022, measles activity has also been slowly increasing globally, with large outbreaks ongoing in multiple countries across South Asia and Africa. UKHSA is urging the public to ensure they are up to date with MMR vaccines before traveling and before attending festivals where measles can spread more easily.

**Resources**

There are leaflets and posters (including translations) to promote MMR vaccines - please feel free to share these widely where they will be helpful.

* Flyer for use in primary and secondary care which addresses common questions about MMR, with an English version available to order <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-dont-let-your-child-catch-it-flyer-for-schools> and download versions in Arabic, Afrikaans, Bengali, Chinese, Cantonese,  French, Hindi, Hebrew, German,  Italian,  Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese,  Romani, Romanian, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Ukrainian and Yiddish.
* MMR leaflet with more detail on the infections covered by MMR available to order in [English](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrvaccinewhichhelpsprotectagainstallthree-488&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fATV23ySSzP90kX9CADWOEaE5L46KFiB3QNG3bNSH%2B0%3D&reserved=0), [Bengali](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletbengali20211381&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=nknwpJe4nA6yDwE8dWMVipcks6WuxIwTZO4Fa9idB3I%3D&reserved=0), [Polish](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletpolish20211384&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DFM0I%2B8wy9pFNXocsvBLmfZsdaGKuw0%2BYmE1qIrqiMc%3D&reserved=0), [Romanian](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletromanian20211385&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=U60RaoWYHj6RZt3Gc7aW4zn4fFrd7ZQcBVv1aYC43vQ%3D&reserved=0), [Somali](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletsomali20211386&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=akv82fh02rNxrQabWXTQO5gF0%2FJDP%2FhD5aKnK%2FfjbqA%3D&reserved=0), [Ukrainian](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletukrainian20211382&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=tL0THBhUm2y8STU7jduYOb8nCgbn8g1IbvZlKPoj8dA%3D&reserved=0) and [Yoruba](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FViewArticle.html%3Fsp%3DSmmrforallgeneralleafletyoruba20211383&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rw83%2FJe2pa17l0RXdqh7zV9nLUyVm9NkdBViCPA9Tk4%3D&reserved=0)

Measles leaflet for young people [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-measles-patient-leaflet-for-young-people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-measles-patient-leaflet-for-young-peoplea) and poster version <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-measles-poster-about-measles-in-young-people>

* Measles outbreak poster for primary and secondary care including outbreak poster and leaflet and poster for GP reception areas <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-outbreak> Czech, Arabic, Spanish, Romani and Romanian
* Routine childhood immunisation resources are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation#immunisation-leaflets-and-guidance-for-parents> and supporting videos here: [https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/ArticleSearch.html?sp=Sreset&keyword=IMMS](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthpublications.gov.uk%2FArticleSearch.html%3Fsp%3DSreset%26keyword%3DIMMS&data=05%7C01%7CN.WakelyGriffiths%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7C6fee660cd5764008577308da55d1c6c7%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C637916656707945556%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=zm586hwdWrXi2X2ho0%2FEJ7DqvrVh6xTX1SBJQJM83bI%3D&reserved=0)
* We know that measles is more common in some parts of Africa, Asia and mainland Europe, and expect to see a rise in cases as people return from summer holidays. Please help us to promote the UKHSA blog ‘[Staying well when travelling abroad this summer’.](https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2023/05/22/staying-well-when-travelling-abroad-this-summer/) Please also promote this among your staff through your internal communication channels.
* There are a [variety of social media assets](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flnks.gd%2Fl%2FeyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..OeuQsqMY4ANYRfrc8NPqCMGF_l6anUI2WxIdQDZXu9o%2Fs%2F1292525484%2Fbr%2F206626843737-l&data=05%7C01%7CJennifer.Alford%40ukhsa.gov.uk%7Cb6d738ae260f440249a808db730e2296%7Cee4e14994a354b2ead475f3cf9de8666%7C0%7C0%7C638230276773243745%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vP%2BwkwYeFnZh%2F8C9Oam4ZxWsSKNndw3nZ0lNqQ2nP10%3D&reserved=0) which you and your communications team can use to encourage people to check they and their children are up to date on their MMR vaccines before travelling this summer. This also includes suggested wording.