

Next drop-in sessions: w/c 26/2/24

Team's links contained within the email or contact us on: england.pheast@nhs.net

FOCUS ON MEASLES, MUMPS AND RUBELLA (MMR)

As widely reported in the media there has been a resurgence of measles, with 350 lab confirmed cases in 2023. Since 1st October 2023 there have been 285 confirmed cases (77% in West Midlands) with the majority of cases in children under aged 10 and linked to school and nursery cases in Birmingham and Coventry. All regions however did report cases across the year and further outbreaks of measles have been predicted in other towns and cities unless urgent action is taken.

Following the introduction of MMR vaccine in 1988 and coverage levels in excess of 90%, measles transmission was substantially reduced and notification of measles fell progressively to very low levels:

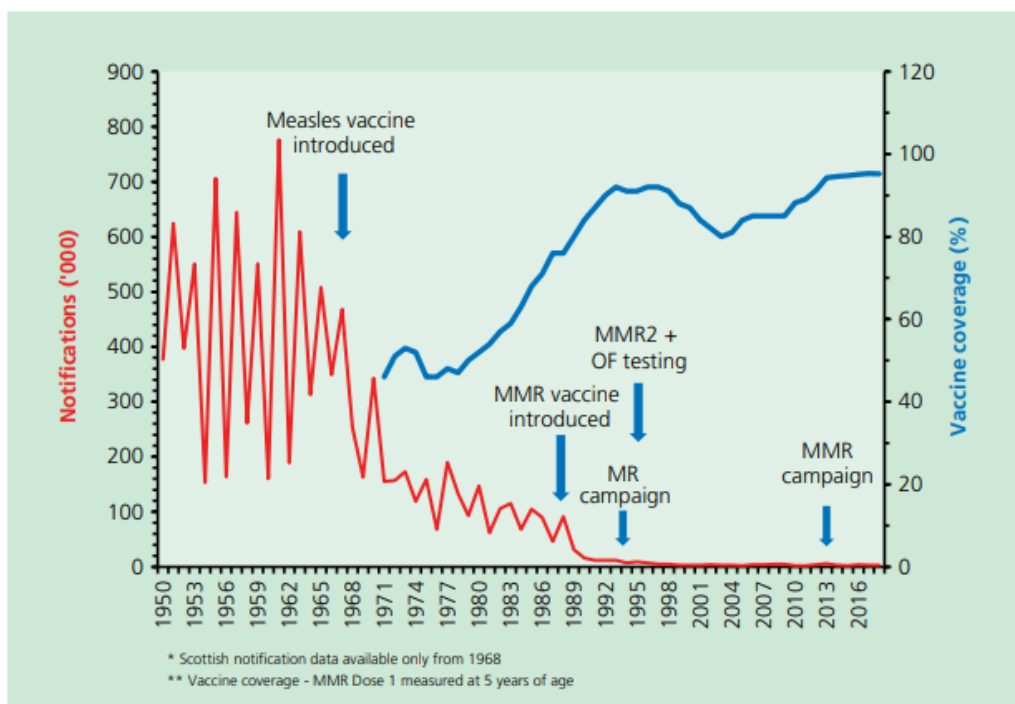


Figure 21.1 Coverage of measles vaccination and measles notifications from 1950 to 2018

In the late 1990's and early 2000s national coverage at two years of age dropped to below 80% and a significant proportion of young adults in this cohort remain susceptible.

In 2016 the WHO declared that the UK had eliminated endemic measles however annual vaccine coverage estimated for MMR1 at age two have been decreasing slowly since 2013/14 and measles transmission was declared re-established in 2018

It is vitally important that we all do our part in increasing MMR uptake within all cohorts. The national vaccination catch-up campaign for 2023/2024 was confirmed to be focusing on MMR in November 2023. Practice responsibilities are:

- **From November 2023 to March 2024** – practices will be required to undertake local call and recall for eligible individuals aged 12 months up to and including 5 years.
- **From January 2024 to March 2024** – practices are asked to support requests for vaccination from individuals aged 6 years up to and including 25 years. This cohort is identified through the national call/recall and where individuals contact their practice following receipt of an invitation practices are required to check the individual's vaccination status and offer vaccination if clinically appropriate.

[The national call/recall project](#) had now moved to include the 6-11yr olds. A further catch-up programme with 11-25yrs age extension has been brought forward in London and West Midlands, this will take place over coming months with focus on raising awareness and reaching high risk areas in those under vaccinated.

Practices will receive an item of service (iOS) fee of £10.06 for each dose of MMR vaccine administered which includes patients who require additional doses for medical reasons - [General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlements Directions 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) see page 53:

“(5) Where additional doses of the vaccines specified in tables 1-4 within this SFE are required for medical reasons, NHS England must also pay an iOS fee. NHS England must also pay an iOS fee for each missed dose where clinically indicated as outlined in 19(4).”

We ask that all Practice Immunisation Leads oversee their practice's participation in the campaign and continue to make every effort to vaccinate their registered patients who are missing any MMR doses. It is vitally important that the resurgence of measles does not spread. Uptake rates across our region remain below the 95% target.

Full campaign details are available here: [NHS England » Confirmation of national vaccination and immunisation catch-up campaign for 2023/24](#)

UKHSA information on the confirmed cases can be accessed [here: Confirmed cases of measles in England by month, age and region: 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We are always interested in what is happening locally. If there are any local projects to improve MMR (and other immunisation) rates please contact us at england.pheast@nhs.net

Please remember to refer to **The Green Book** chapters for full vaccine guidance including contraindications and precautions [Immunisation against infectious disease - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Links to guidance and resources are also available in the 'Vaccine Programme Resources' section on the East of England Immunisation Team's website: [NHS England — East of England » East of England Immunisation Team](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can GPs vaccinate their own staff, and can they get paid?

Staff working in general practice can be vaccinated within the practice they work in if required. They should be registered using "Immediate and Necessary Treatment". An item of service fee will be paid to the practice.

2. What should I do if a patient requests antibody testing?

Antibody testing is not routinely recommended - if there is no documented or reliable verbal evidence of a patient being fully vaccinated they should be considered unvaccinated, and the relevant vaccinations offered.

3. What about antibody testing for staff?

The Green Book [Chapter 21](#) (page 10) refers to “evidence of seroconversion” in relation to occupational health situations: for many HCWs their employers will pay for an antibody test for infection control purposes. Some employers may also pay for antibody testing to remove the need for exclusion/isolation in the event of an outbreak. Antibody testing for staff is not an NHS service and the advice remains to offer MMR vaccination to any staff who do not have evidence of previous vaccination.

4. Is there a vaccine shortage and where do I get vaccine from (for all ages)?

MMR vaccines can be ordered for all ages from ImmForm. M-M-RvaxPRO® should be ordered as your first choice and is available to all account holders without restriction. There are no current stock issues. There is a cap on ordering Priorix, to enable stocks to be balanced. The priority should remain those children and adults within the National Call and Recall campaign (12months to 25 yrs.), but any patient is eligible for vaccination upon request. Please check ImmForm for regular updates.

Please do not over order and overstock your fridges. The cold chain principles remain the same. Any breaches should be reported to us in the usual way: [NHS England — East of England » Vaccine and cold chain incident management](#)

5. What should I do if I need more porcine-free MMR vaccine?

Priorix® may be ordered if you serve communities that do not accept vaccines containing porcine gelatine. Practices may order up to 15 packs of Priorix® per ImmForm account per week. If a clinic is booked and you need more than 15 packs are please contact the helpdesk at helpdesk@immform.org.uk and this cap can be overridden.

6. Is there an upper age limit for MMR?

No, there is no upper age limit. MMR can be given to individuals of any age and can be offered opportunistically and promoted to unvaccinated or partially vaccinated adults. Individuals born before 1970 are likely to have had all three natural infections and are therefore less likely to be susceptible, **we do not expect these older patients to be actively recalled by practices but MMR vaccine can be given to these individuals if requested.** Please refer to the [Green Book \(page 10\)](#) for the full guidance

7. Can I refer children to the Community and School Age Immunisation Service (CSAIS)?

If a parent/carer is contacting the GP surgery to enquire about a missing MMR vaccination (child is 0-5yrs) this should be completed by the GP practice – unless there is a special circumstance which would prevent them from attending. If circumstances require it, and the child is now school aged, contact details for the CSAIS service can be shared with the parent for vaccination in school, or the community.

8. Does a historic infection with measles exclude the need for MMR vaccination?

MMR is recommended when protection against measles, mumps and/or rubella is required. MMR vaccine can be given irrespective of a history of measles, mumps or rubella infection or vaccination. There are no ill effects from immunising such individuals because they have pre-existing immunity that inhibits replication of the vaccine viruses. (Green Book Chapter 21, page 9)

9. Does someone who has had 1 or 2 single measles vaccine also need MMR

Single antigen vaccinations are not used within the National schedule and x2 doses of MMR should be offered to the patient.

10. Parents are requesting their child under 1 yr. of age has the MMR vaccination –can this be bought forward?

We appreciate it can be concerning for parents with the news about the current measles outbreaks in the media. Please can you assure parents that UKHSA are not recommending the first MMR vaccination is given outside of the national routine programme as the vaccine may not be as effective if given before one year of age (since residual maternal antibodies may reduce the response).

It is great news that they are keen to vaccinate against MMR, please capitalise on this for all other vaccinations as part of the routine programme. If there is any change or any group of patients are to be vaccinated, as part of an outbreak response, UKHSA will directly advise.

11. Parents/carers have had MMR reminder letters and their child is up to date.

Due to the current concerns about the risk of measles outbreaks in England, a national call/recall programme is taking place to ensure that patients in specific age cohorts missing their full course of MMR vaccination are contacted and made aware of how to access vaccination. This process is undertaken by a national review of NHS data, which looks for specific vaccination events that have been coded in a patient's record. In a small number of cases, a patient may have had a vaccination but for a number of possible reasons this has not been recorded in their record with the standard code. This means that they will be sent a letter. We apologise for any inconvenience or concern caused if someone who is fully vaccinated (or their carers) are contacted in this way and thank you for having already taken the time to receive this life-saving vaccine. Please take the opportunity to update the patient's record to ensure they do not appear in future searches.

Programme resources are linked on our website: [NHS England — East of England » Vaccine programme resources](#)

Polite reminder: Please do not give our contact details to parents- we don't have access to any patient records or clinical systems. Thank you 😊