

NEWS RELEASE

New Campaign Launches In Greater Manchester To Drive Up Childhood Vaccinations Amid Concerns Over Fall In Uptake

- **UKHSA Chief Executive Jenny Harries visits Salford to launch campaign as measles cases continue to rise**
- **16.5% or 1 in 5 of children in Greater Manchester are not protected by their 5th birthday**

Following a decline in childhood vaccination uptake, NHS Greater Manchester has partnered with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), NHS England and Liverpool City Council to launch a new multi-media marketing campaign across England to remind parents and carers of the risk of their children missing out on protection against serious diseases that are re-emerging in the country.

Launched on Monday, the campaign was developed based on insight and feedback from parents in the North West – starting with a powerful video advert told from the perspective of children telling their parents and carers: “Our generation’s risk of illnesses like measles and whooping cough is rising...If we’re not vaccinated, we’re not protected.”

[Uptake levels of childhood vaccines](#) offered through the [routine NHS vaccination programme](#) in England have been falling over the past decade across all vaccines, including whooping cough, measles, mumps and rubella, polio, meningitis and diphtheria - with England no longer having the levels of population immunity recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) that is needed to prevent outbreaks. Crucially, lower vaccine uptake within communities is directly linked to wider health inequalities.

In Greater Manchester, 83.5% of children are fully protected by their 5th birthday, meaning 1 in 5 are not fully protected by the time they’ve started school.

Lynn Donkin, director of public health at Bolton Council said:

“We need to urgently reverse the decline in the uptake of childhood vaccinations, in order to protect our communities. The aim of this campaign is to encourage parents to check their children’s vaccination status and book appointments if their children have missed any immunisations. The ongoing measles outbreak we are seeing is a reminder that these diseases have not gone away and vaccinations are still very much needed.

“While the majority of the country is protected, there are still high numbers of children in some areas, including Greater Manchester, that continue to be unprotected from preventable diseases. This not only negatively impacts their own health, but also other unvaccinated people around them such as babies, school friends, family and those in their wider community.

“What is clear is that unless uptake improves, we will start to see the diseases that these vaccines protect against re-emerging and causing more serious illness.”

To counter this decline, the national UKHSA marketing campaign is running alongside a NHS MMR vaccination catch up campaign. Areas with low uptake, including Greater Manchester, will be a focus for support and parents of children aged from six to 11 years will be contacted directly and urged to make an appointment with their child’s GP practice for any missed MMR vaccines.

As well as the TV advert, the UKHSA campaign, supported by the NHS and local authorities will be seen across a range of channels and formats including radio advertising, digital display, online and on social media. Additional advertising will be seen in the West Midlands, North West and London where there are larger pockets of low uptake.

WHO recently repeated their warning on the growing measles threat due to vaccination rates being well below the 95% target – highlighting that more than half the world faces high measles risk. This includes [Europe](#), where it warns of the high chance of spread from areas experiencing high circulation and the fact that the seasonal peak of the virus could be seen in the coming months.

Greater Manchester has and will continue to play an important role in the drive to increase childhood vaccinations. UKHSA chief executive, Dr Jenny Harries, visited sites in Salford to launch the campaign. Parts of the region have some of the lowest uptake rates in the country for some childhood vaccines and local health partners have helped to develop the campaign - so she visited a GP vaccination clinic in Salford to see their on-going work to catch up children who have missed out on MMR vaccines.

In addition, pop up measles vaccination clinics have been set up in the low uptake areas across Greater Manchester and videos have been created using experts including immunologist, Dr Stephen Hughes from the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital, who has been filmed for a wider campaign video.

Dr Manisha Kumar, chief medical officer for NHS Greater Manchester said:

“The MMR vaccination offers the best protection against becoming seriously unwell, and while an increase in measles cases is a global issue, the NHS in England is doing all it can to ensure people have the best possible protection, which is why we have expanded our MMR catch up campaign even further in recent weeks and have been contacting hundreds of thousands of families, urging them to come forward.

“Two doses are needed to get maximum protection, so as well as sending reminders to parents and guardians of children up to five who have yet to get full protection, the NHS has been asking all parents and guardians of children aged six to 11 who have missed one or more doses of the MMR vaccine to book a catch up at their GP practice, or through MMR pop-ups in schools and other convenient places.

"Measles is a serious illness, and in some cases can lead to having to be admitted to hospital for treatment, so the message is clear: if you or your young ones aren't vaccinated, you aren't protected, and it is vital you come forward as soon as possible for the MMR jab."

Notes

For the full routine NHS Childhood vaccination timetable visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

Cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly (COVER) programme 2023 to 2024: UK quarterly data and commentary on uptake/coverage achieved by the UK childhood immunisation programme:

Quarterly vaccination coverage statistics for children aged up to 5 years in the UK (COVER programme): July to Sept 2023