

**Date as postmark****Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine catch-up campaign**

Dear Parent/guardian,

You may have heard about an increase in the number of measles cases in the UK and other countries across Europe. Measles is a highly infectious viral illness. It can be unpleasant and sometimes leads to serious complications. This letter is to advise you how to protect your child and others.

**Measles can cause very serious illness**

Measles usually causes a runny nose, red eyes, cough, high temperature and rash. It can also cause complications including ear infections, diarrhoea, pneumonia and convulsions. It is more likely to be serious in pregnant women, people whose immunity is not working properly and babies under a year of age. Very serious complications, such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE) are rare, but can be fatal. Further details can be found at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/measles>.

**Measles spreads very easily**

Measles is one of the most infectious diseases known. You can catch measles if you spend 15 minutes in the same room with someone who has the disease, or even less time if you are in direct contact. The measles virus is spread through the air and in tiny droplets that come out of the nose and mouth of an infected person. Anyone can get measles if they haven't been vaccinated or they haven't had it before.

**MMR vaccine**

The MMR vaccine provides safe and effective protection against measles, mumps and rubella and has been shown across the world to be a safe and effective way of preventing measles. It can protect your child and others against measles infection and the potential serious consequences. The vaccine is free and is part of the routine

childhood immunisation schedule in Northern Ireland. Two doses of MMR vaccine offer the best way to protect your child against measles, mumps and rubella.

### **What you need to do next?**

In light of the continuing measles activity in UK and Europe, we strongly recommend that you check that your child is fully up to date with their MMR vaccinations. Check your child's red book and get in touch with your GP practice if you are not sure. The first dose is usually offered when a child is one year old and the second when they are 3 years and 4 months old.

### **Northern Ireland MMR catch-up campaign**

If your child is not up to date on their vaccines you can book an appointment to get the vaccine through the Northern Ireland MMR catch-up campaign which is running until 31st March 2024. Children between 12 months and 5 years of age can get the vaccine through their GP practice and those aged 6 years to 25 years of age can attend an HSC Trust vaccination clinic.

Further information can be found on NI Direct. For your local arrangements on how to book an appointment in your Health and Social Care Trust please visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr-catch-up](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr-catch-up).

A child aged 16 and under will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian on the day.

For more information on measles, please visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr) or scan the QR code to access the Public Health Agency leaflet on MMR vaccination.



For any queries contact the PHA MMR catch-up dedicated phone line service 02895 368 300.

Yours faithfully,

Louise Flanagan

Consultant in Public Health

Public Health Agency