**Croydon Public Health Briefing: Measles and MMR**

**24 January 2023**

1. **Introduction**

Following a number of years of decreased cases, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has seen increased number of measles cases in England in 2023 and continuing into 2024. The majority of these cases are in children under 10 years of age. High numbers of cases have recently been seen in Birmingham and North West London however there have also been a small number of cases in South West London and one case in Croydon in 2024.

Measles is a vaccine preventable illness and over the last year there have been several NHS campaigns to boost uptake of routine childhood vaccinations which can prevent infections. Ongoing messaging nationally, regionally and locally is continuing to ask people to ensure they are fully vaccinated.

1. **What is measles?**

Measles is an infectious disease that can lead to serious problems such as pneumonia, meningitis, and on rare occasions, long-term disability, or death. Symptoms include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red-brown rash. Measles spreads easily between unvaccinated people via coughs and sneezes however is vaccine preventable.

1. **MMR vaccination**

MMR vaccine provides protection against three diseases: measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Children are offered 1st dose at age one and 2nd dose at age 3 years 4 months. The MMR vaccine is a safe and effective combined vaccine and 2 doses of the vaccine provide the best protection. Historic concerns around the vaccine, whilst not scientifically supported have resulted in some groups refusing vaccination whilst many other factors also impact uptake numbers. The vaccination is a safe and effective intervention against these potentially serious conditions.

1. **MMR vaccine uptake in Croydon**

Over recent history there has been a declining national trend in childhood vaccination uptake, and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, vaccination uptake has been lower in London compared to other parts of England. Three types of barriers have been cited for not taking up vaccination and they are: confidence barriers, complacency barriers and convenience barriers[[1]](#footnote-2).

Croydon is lower compared to London and England; The 1 dose MMR coverage for Croydon is reported as 84.2% at 5 years in the most recent July – September Cover data[[2]](#footnote-3).Whilst the vaccine is a two dose vaccination the first dose is 95% effective in preventing clinical measles, the second dose ensures protection in the additional individuals.

1. **What is being done to address the situation?**

* Childhood immunisations is a key priority. Public Health and the Council continue to work closely with partners on the uptake of all childhood immunisations and in particular MMR.
* A Croydon MMR action plan is held by the ICB, regular meetings take place.
* SWL ICB are currently developing a localised immunisations strategy in line with the national strategy that has recently been published.
* All children who have missed one or both doses of the MMR will be/have been contacted by the NHS as part of the NHS catch up campaign. There is also a focus on areas with low uptake of the vaccine and over one million people aged 11 to 25 years-old in London and the West Midlands will be invited by the NHS to catch up on their missed MMR vaccinations.
* SW London ICS are working with GP practices to identify any support for practices with the lowest MMR vaccine uptake.
* SWL ICS communication and engagement team is promoting public facing messages on MMR vaccination and is exploring opportunities for community outreach.
* Croydon Council Public Health team has organised training for Council staff through the SWL Immunisation team, to have conversations with parents and carers about the MMR vaccine.
* Public Health continue to share messaging with the Croydon community and the DPH has previously attended community sessions discussing vaccination.
* UKHSA are reviewing all resources and are planning engagement sessions at a London level.
* The immunisation steering group which meets regularly will have a renewed focus for 2024 and will develop an immunisation action plan for Croydon following on from the national strategy and SWL strategy building on previous work.

1. **What can I do?**

Please share these key messages via your channels:

* Encourage parents to check child’s red book to see if they are up to date with vaccination particularly before any travel.
* Stay at home and get medical advice if symptomatic. If needing to attend a GP or healthcare location phone ahead if you think you may have measles.
* All childhood vaccinations including MMR and polio are important to keep children safe and healthy. For more information visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

1. **Useful links**

* UKHSA video (about 2 mins): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe7FPKZgNgw>
* NHS measles info: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>
* NHS MMR info: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/>
* Green Book Chapter on Measles: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e021b9140f0b6665e80187b/Greenbook_chapter_21_Measles_December_2019.pdf>

1. [Confidence, complacency, convenience model of vaccine hesitancy | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-service-information/covid-19-vaccinations/behavioural-insights/resources/3Cmodel-vaccine-hesitancy) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cover-of-vaccination-evaluated-rapidly-cover-programme-2023-to-2024-quarterly-data [↑](#footnote-ref-3)